

CONFERENCE
OF 1876
RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

AN ESSAY.

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Vol. A5 e. 270

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THE
IMPORTANCE
OF
RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

RELIGIOUS Establishments have prevailed universally among men. They are founded in human nature, and are essential to the good order of society in every nation. Their utility and importance have never been questioned, but in awful periods pregnant with Revolution, in which the human mind, restless and impatient of all restraint, glowed with the desire of innovation only, regardless of all consequences, however desolating and destructive. Even in these, the zeal of accomplishing their object, and the fear of successful opposition, produced a general union and co-operation among all descriptions of men.

IN the general Reformation, when the Protestants withdrew from the Catholics, the idea perhaps scarcely occurred to them, to separate the interests and laws of

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the Church from those of the State. The body from whom they revolted was extensive and powerful, and it required the firmest union and exertion of all ranks, and of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical, to assert their religious freedom, and to maintain their independence. Individuals opposed not their opinions wantonly, on this subject, against one another; like a well disciplined army, they combined their energy against the common enemy.

AFTER the death of Charles I. of England, on the other hand, there was no common aim, nor common fear to unite men. All orders aspired after more religious liberty; but their views of it were various, and degenerated into the wildest civil and ecclesiastical schemes.

SIMILAR features mark strongly the times in which we live. A disposition prevails to loose the bonds of society, and bold efforts are made, to undermine, and to overturn the Constitution of Church and State. In such a situation, no one who loves God and his country, ought to remain inactive. It is the duty of every member of society, in the station which Providence hath assigned him, to contribute his share in opposing the tide of error and licentiousness.

AMONG other errors, the opinion is afloat, that Church Establishments are unnecessary. I propose to examine this opinion. If it shall appear to be well founded, let it be no longer reckoned an innovation, but an improvement; but if the contrary shall appear, let every man beware of such an opinion, and discourage it, as he values the interest of religion, and the good order of society.

By a Religious Establishment is generally understood, such an intimate connection between Religion and Civil Government, their laws, their public officers, and general administration, as may most effectually secure the best interests, and great end of both. That establishment is the most perfect, in which the two interfere the least with each others functions and immediate objects, and in which, at the same time, they can most readily co-operate in promoting successfully the present order, and the future happiness of man.

THE general practice of tribes and nations, rude and refined, ancient and modern, may not alone amount to a complete proof; but surely it is a presumption, that Religious Establishments are necessary to the existence and order of society. We shall consider the constitution and practice of some only of the most eminent: others with whom we are less acquainted, must be held to be like them on this subject, until the contrary shall be proved.

SECTION I.

Religious Establishments have prevailed universally in every Age and Nation.

THE natural order of history leads our attention first to the state of the ancient Patriarchs. They formed no extensive nor permanent associations, but such as arose from the relationships of nature. Every father governed his own family, and their offspring also, while they remained on his territory, and submitted to his jurisdiction. He presided in their education and discipline, in their religious worship, and in their general government. His knowledge and experience handed down to them their laws and customs, both civil and religious, and his authority enforced them. The offices of prophet, priest, and king, were thus united in the same Patriarch. "I know him," said God of Abraham, "that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." We find him, as a priest, offering sacrifices and prayers, building altars, and calling on the name of the Lord. "And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin, in the self-same day, as God had said unto him." He acts as a judge and magistrate in dismissing Hagar and Ishmael from his family and territory. And he exhibits all the skill, the prowess, and general character of an eminent

military chieftain, in his pursuit and defeat of the confederate kings in the vale of Siddim, when he rescued Lot his brother's son, with all his property and people.

MELCHIZEDEC, a neighbouring and cotemporary patriarch, is represented in the same ancient record, as king of Salem and priest of the most high God. What could be more intimate than such an union of religious and civil authority in the same person.

THESE offices came to be gradually separated with the progress of time, and increase of society. The father devolved a part of the burden on his first-born son: He connected the priesthood with the primogeniture; and as a recompence, assigned him a double portion of inheritance. A priesthood, and an establishment for the maintenance of the offices of religion, were thus gradually formed, and united with, and under the patriarchal authority.

THIS account of the ancient patriarchs, will resemble generally the state of other tribes, in any age or quarter of the world, who are in a similar degree of rudeness or of civilization. The chieftain, or head of the tribe or district, either acts himself as priest, or he regulates the places, the times, and modes of worship, the kind and number of sacrifices, and the assistants necessary to prepare and offer them. This is uniformly the account which Homer gives of the Grecian princes, priests, and sacred rites. Awed by the plague described in the 1st book of the Iliad,

Achilles thus the King of men addrest,
 " But let some prophet, or some sacred sage,

"Explore the cause of great Apollo's rage,
 "Let altars smoke and hecatombs be paid."

Again in the second book,

With hasty feasts they sacrifice and pray,
 T' avert the dangers of the doubtful day.
 A steer of five year's age, large limb'd, and fed,
 To Jove's high altars Agamemnon led,
 When thus the King prefers his solemn prayer.

LOSKIEL, describing the North American Indians, says,
 "At general and solemn sacrifices, the oldest men per-
 "form the office of priests." *History of Moravian Mis-*
sions.

AT Otaheite in the South Seas, "the Tahowa, or
 "Priest, is hereditary, and is respected in a degree next
 "to their kings. As there are priests of every class,
 "they officiate only among that class to which they be-
 "long, the priest of the inferior class is never called on
 "by those of superior rank, nor will the priest of su-
 "perior rank officiate for any of the inferior class."
Hawkesworth's Cooke's Voyages.

THE Jews enjoyed a Religious Establishment, dictated
 and ordained by God. Having selected them for his
 peculiar people, for the purpose of entrusting to them
 his holy oracles, he assigned them not only religious,
 but civil and political laws, suited to the end for which
 he had chosen and separated them from the other nations.
 Their hierarchy was magnificent, and the provision made

for it was extensive; but both were secured by the same authority, as that by which the nation held the land of Canaan. The civil and ecclesiastical parts of their constitution, were blended and inseparable: and they were assured, and afterwards experienced, that any attempt to disunite them, or comparatively to neglect either of them, should be followed with proportional calamity and judgment. Their constitution indeed was a Theocracy. God was their King. The tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, was his palace. The priests were his servants, whose duties he prescribed, and whose maintenance he ordained. The land of Canaan was his domain, granted to the Israelitish nation on certain conditions of homage and service, and for a certain term of years. In this view, the whole constitution was a religious establishment, designed and appropriated to a religious end; and on this principle the various laws of Moses, however trivial or unintelligible some of them may appear, have been successfully explained.

IN turning our attention to the heathen nations, we shall find the same incorporation of religious with civil government. Wherever we find a people, not as individuals, but in their corporate capacity as a state, by their laws or rules directing or regulating the affairs of religion, or regulated by them, there, we are entitled to conclude, is a Religious Establishment. "The Egyptians," Herodotus says, "were the first who built altars, and erected "statues and temples to their gods." The provision for the priesthood and church was not only secured to them by law, but, as Moses informs us, was singularly respected in the time of great and general calamity. "And Joseph

“bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the
 “Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine
 “prevailed over them: So the land became Pharaoh’s.
 “Only *the land of the priests* bought he not; for the priests
 had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat
 “their portion which Pharaoh gave them; wherefore
 “they sold not their lands.”

It appears from the following passage, that there was
 some national religious establishment in Assyria, 2 Kings
 xvii. 27, 29. The king having carried the ten Samaritan
 tribes captive to the East, substituted in their room colo-
 nies from Babylon, and other Eastern and Northern re-
 gions, and endeavoured to dispose them to the religion
 and customs of the Samaritans. “The king of Assyria
 “commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests
 “whom ye brought from thence, and let them go and
 “dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of
 “the God of the land. Howbeit, *every nation made gods*
 “*of their own*, and put them in the houses of the high
 “places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in
 “their cities wherein they dwelt.” So powerful was the
 influence of their former national religion and customs,
 that though they feared the Lord because of his judg-
 ments, yet they still served their own former national
 graven images. Nebuchadnezzar too, the king of Ba-
 bylon, Dan. iii. 1. enforced the national religion by the
 severest penal laws, “Whosoever falleth not down, and
 “worshippeth the image, shall be cast into the midst of a
 “burning fiery furnace.”

DUALISM, or the belief of two supreme Divinities,

Good and Evil, or light and darkness, was the national faith of Persia, which Xenophon, in the conclusion of the story of Araspus, thought it unreasonable to deny. The Zend contained the sacred books of the Persians. Their sacred fires, the emblem of the sun, and of light and good in general, and their temples were numerous. The Magi, or national priests, were divided into three classes, the Archimagus, the Superintendants, and inferior priests. The temple of the Archimagus was richly endowed with lands; but the inferior priests depended on the offerings of the people. Mr. Hyde, chap. i. alleges, that there were more than seventy different religious sects, besides the national or orthodox Magi.

EVERY one who is at all acquainted with the history of Greece and Rome, knows, that religion was altogether blended with the policy of the state. The temples and statues of the gods, which were without number, were erected at the public expence. Foreign gods were received and adopted by public decrees. Socrates suffered death for teaching doctrines contrary to those of his country. Provision was made by law for the maintenance of the priests, and of the public sacrifices. Religious rites, and the explication of omens and prodigies, were interwoven with civil and military affairs, and form of course a considerable part of the history of these people. The authority of the priests was great, but it was not independent. At Rome the Tribunes of the Commons could oblige them, however unwillingly, to perform those sacred offices which were connected with state operations. The right of election to the priesthood, originally in the Sacred College, was, in the year 650, transferred to the

people, and restored and transferred repeatedly, till the office itself passed, in common with many other popular rights, into the hands of Augustus and his successors. Civil and ecclesiastical affairs were thus most intimately united in one common head. That the civil power sometimes interfered in regulating ecclesiastical matters, even in the earliest times of the Roman republic, appears from Livy, lib. 4. cap. 30. where he states, that in consequence of an uncommonly dry season, a pestilence having invaded both cattle and men, the people became extremely anxious, and addicted to various new and foreign modes of sacrificing and worship, till at last it was judged necessary that the Ediles should interpose their authority, and order that no gods but those of the Romans should be worshipped, nor in any other way than that appointed by the laws. A similar religious zeal, and public restraint of it, happened about the time that Hannibal invaded Italy, and took the city Tarentum. (Liv. lib. 25. 1.)

THE KORAN may be considered as both the religious creed, and civil code, of all the Mahometan tribes and nations, from the Atlantic to the Ganges. In Mahomet and his successors, the regal and sacerdotal offices were united. They were the supreme judges and interpreters of the Koran. They accommodated it to their various policy, and with it in the one hand, and the sword in the other, they subjected a great part of mankind to their faith and empire. Innumerable volumes have been composed to supply its defects, as they occurred with the progress of dominion, and in the administration of public and private justice. On the most respectable of these are

founded the decisions in all the courts of the Moslems. In every country which acknowledges the authority of Mahomet, so intimate is the connection, so absolute the dependence of the civil government on religion, that any change in the latter, must necessarily involve the ruin of the former.

THE Celtes is the common name given to most of the original inhabitants of Europe, who both preceded, and afterwards invaded and exterminated the Roman empire. Our knowledge of their government is chiefly derived from the Roman historians, Cæsar and Tacitus. From them it appears, that the Druids were both their priests and their judges in civil and criminal causes, and their judgment was final. If any private or public person submitted not to their sentence, they interdicted him from all religious privileges, which with them was a punishment the most dreadful. Every one abandoned him who was thus interdicted, and fled from him as pestilential and dangerous.

AMONG the Hindoos, who inhabit an extent of country nearly equal to all Europe, the priests and sovereigns are of different tribes or casts, but the priests are superior in rank. Their authority is supreme, and diffuses the influence of religion over the general administration and conduct of society. It extends not only to government and general order, but to meats and drinks, and private occupations.

IN China the Emperor is Sovereign Pontiff, presides in all public acts of religion, and renders it generally sub-

servient to the policy of the state. The government is patriarchal, and, through every department of the state, seems naturally and happily to unite religion with civil society.

SIR GEORGE STAUNTON, indeed, has said, in a late celebrated publication, "There is in China no state religion. None is paid, preferred, or encouraged. The Emperor is of one faith; many of the Mandarins of another; and the majority of the common people of a third, which is that of Fo." And afterwards—"No legal tax is imposed on the score of religion,"

ALL this may be granted, without making China an exception from the general doctrine, which I would establish. The advantage of a general legal tax will be afterwards considered: it is only necessary, at present, to observe, that it is not absolutely essential to an establishment. If the law, whether of consuetude or of statute, approves and enforces religion; and if the prince, and other officers of state, exemplify it, regulate and direct it, and especially if they shall render it constitutionally and uniformly subservient to the general interests of the state, it is undoubtedly a Religious Establishment. It may be destitute of advantages which other religious establishments enjoy; it may have other funds or means of maintenance, such as mortifications, or consuetudinary perquisites, and especially among a people of long duration, which seldom or never require the direct and positive regulation and authority of law: but still it will answer the definition which we have given in the introduction to this Essay, and will serve the important end of a Religious Establishment.

Neither is the general doctrine affected by the different creeds of the Emperor and Mandarins. No person thoroughly acquainted with Britain will deny, that there is a national established religion: yet a stranger might fancy it otherwise, because the system of doctrine and worship varies in different parts of the British empire; and it has sometimes happened, that the king had one faith, some of the nobles another, and the great body of the people another.

BUT this subject is not dependent altogether on argument; there are facts and authorities, which we now produce, to shew that religion always was, and is established in China.

“ALMOST from the beginning of the monarchy,” says Duhalde, p. 641, “it was appointed that the Emperor, “soon after his exaltation, should humble himself so far, “as to plough a few furrows, and that the produce of his “tillage should be offered by him in sacrifice to Tyen.”

“THAT Shang-ti, the supreme Deity, is of infinite “understanding, that he so loveth virtue, that to offer “him sacrifice, it is not sufficient for the Emperor, to “whom this function belongs, to join the priesthood to “the royal dignity, but it is moreover necessary, that he “should be either upright or penitent.”

Id. p. 642. “THE Emperors have always thought “themselves obliged to observe the primitive rites, the “solemn functions of which belong to them alone, as “heads of the nation. Thus they are Emperors to go-

“vern, Masters to teach, and Priests to sacrifice; to the
 “end that the Imperial Majesty, humbling himself in
 “presence of his court, by the sacrifices which he offers
 “in name of the empire to the Master of the world, the
 “sovereign authority of the Supreme Being may still
 “shine more resplendent, and exalted above any equal.”—
 “To sacrifice to the first Being of the universe, requires
 “no less than the most exalted person in the empire. It
 “is necessary that he should descend from his throne, and
 “humble himself in presence of Shang-ti, that he might
 “thus draw down the blessings of Heaven on his people,
 “and cause their vows to ascend hither.”

“THE empire becoming elective, the choice fell only
 “upon such as performed the duties of religion with the
 “greatest veneration.”

THE Abbe Grosier, in his History of China, considers
 the government, both civil and ecclesiastical, of China, as
 purely patriarchal. The Emperor is the supreme head
 of church and state. He presides in all the great religious
 festivals, some of which are annual, and others occasional.
 He presents the sacrifices on these occasions, and offers up
 prayers to the Deity in his own name, and in name of
 the people. For example, in the ceremony of his hold-
 ing the plough, the festival is preceded by a sacrifice,
 which the Emperor offers up to Shang-ti; after which he
 and his attendants prepare themselves by three days fast-
 ing and continence. The Shang-ti is afterwards invoked
 by the Emperor, who sacrifices under the title of Sove-
 reign Pontiff, and prays for an abundant harvest in favour
 of his people. He then proceeds to the field and the

plough, attended by the chief persons of his court. Vol. II.

BUT lest it should be supposed, that some ecclesiastical revolution had taken place betwixt the time of these writers, and the period of the late splendid British Embassy to China, I am fortunately enabled to add the account of a still later Embassy of the Dutch East India Company, in the years 1794-5, from the journal of André Everard Van Braam, just published. Vol. I. p. 256, he says, "Shortly after came one of our court conductors, "to acquaint the ambassador and me, that we are to repair to the palace to-morrow morning, at three o'clock, "in order to be present when his Majesty sets off for the temple to offer his annual tribute to the Almighty, in "quality of Sovereign Sacrificer of the empire."

P. 258. "At half past seven the Emperor arrived in "his habit of Sovereign Sacrificer."

P. 259. "In this ceremony the Emperor has some resemblance to the High Priest of the Jews, who entered "once a year, dressed with the greatest magnificence, into "the Holy of Holies, there to offer an expiatory sacrifice, "in the name of the whole Hebrew nation."

AGAIN, vol. II. p. 8. having described the elegant carriage presented by Lord Macartney to the Emperor, he contrasts with it a "waggon which he saw standing by it with four wheels, of equal height, very clumsy, painted green all over, and which is used at the annual ceremony,

when the Emperor pays a solemn homage to agriculture in the Temple of the earth."

FROM these facts and authorities, it appears, that the constitution of the Chinese church, is patriarchal; that the Emperor is the High Priest; that though he be a Tartar himself, he conforms to the national religion, observes its festivals, performs its rites, and worships not only in his own name, but in the name of the people. Hence, from whatever funds the church, the clergy, the temples and sacrifices are maintained, and the expence of all these must be very great, we cannot but conclude that there is a Religious Establishment in China.

SECTION II.

Of Establishments of Christianity.

THERE is no form of church government prescribed in the New Testament. Any thing relative to it in the Old Testament being applicable to the Jewish Theocracy only, was not intended, and must not be wrested to regulate any human government. Jesus Christ wisely and mercifully ordained nothing on this subject. Having sanctioned the general principle, that government and order are necessary, and asserted his own supreme dominion, he left the appointment of subordinate constitutions and laws, to the ordinary exercise of human wisdom.

THE leading principle, in the order of the Christian Church, is, "One is your Master, even Christ." The next is, that he disclaims any interference with human policy and government: "My kingdom is not of this world." He admits that men, being the subjects of both Divine and human government, are bound equally to perform the duties of both these relations: "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." He exemplified these duties. He performed a miracle to pay a tax, even when it seemed doubtful whether he was liable to it: "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a

“ piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me
“ and for thee.”

HE prescribes some general rules of discipline and order for his church: suggests that his servants must exercise their best judgment, accompanied with prayer, in devising and administering suitable laws; and promises his countenance and providential aid: “ Whatsoever ye shall bind
“ on earth, shall be bound in heaven.”

THE appointment and office of the teachers whom he ordained were extraordinary: they were invested with an authority, and with gifts and powers, not intended nor necessary to be continued always in the church. Their names signify the occasion or nature of their office. As disciples they were taught, as apostles they were sent by him.

ASSURING them of his grace and presence, he gave the general commission to them, to preach the gospel to all nations, plainly implying too, to all generations: “ Go
“ and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c. and lo I am
“ with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Hence the apostles rightly understood, that they were to ordain teachers in every church, and these again their successors, in every age. Accordingly they represent him, “ when he ascended up on high, as having given some
“ apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some
“ pastors and teachers.” But when we attempt to distinguish these, and other different names, as denoting several offices, we are forced either to be of many various opinions, or to acknowledge our ignorance of their dif-

ference, and conclude that they were not intended to be exactly imitated. Some of the apostles are also named elders. Paul, writing to Titus, uses the words bishop and elder as synonymous. Evangelists wrote the life of Christ, and probably continued to narrate the simple facts in the history of the gospel, wherever they went. Prophets expounded doctrines, and foretold future events. Teachers, or doctors, instructed and persuaded. Deacons performed manual services about the church, and administered its alms to the poor.

BUT none of these was altogether distinct from the rest. Matthew was an apostle and an evangelist; Stephen was a deacon, a teacher, and a prophet. "The elders that are among you I exhort," says Peter, "who also am an elder." The conclusion on the whole is, that unless it be the general principle, that there shall be always ministers ordained successively in the church, and that all things relative to it and to them, shall "be done decently and in order," there is no particular ecclesiastical constitution or policy prescribed by Jesus nor his apostles: It is left to arise out of the times, occurrences, and circumstances of the various countries where the gospel shall be preached.

HAD it been otherwise, had any precise form of church government been ordained, it must have impeded the success, or altogether, humanly speaking, obstructed the propagation of the gospel. Judging from facts, no one form of government will suit all times, all situations, all national tempers and characters. But whether the civil constitution hath derived its peculiar form from accident,

from expediency, or from necessity, it is certain there will and ought to be a general resemblance to it in the ecclesiastical constitution. Any thing very different or opposite in this respect, must soon assimilate by mutual accommodation, or produce perpetual jealousy and discord. Congregational Independence, or individual unassociated churches, over any extent of country, among a settled people, from the common principles of human nature and of society, as will afterwards be shewn, seems mere speculation, and cannot practically exist. Civil democracy and presbytery are perhaps as incompatible as ecclesiastical democracy and monarchy. Mixed forms of church will most readily associate with mixed forms of state policy. Like minds, manners and forms, will most easily accommodate and unite; and without some accommodation, no church can expect even to be tolerated: For whatever religious men may think, worldly and political men, of whom hitherto the number has been always the greatest and most powerful, are always disposed to assign the second place only to religion and the church.

ACCOMMODATING to this idea, however preposterous at first view it may seem, Jesus Christ and his apostles readily submitted themselves to the civil government. It is an idea which happily relieves the church from political cares and labours, for which it is not destined, and which indeed would interfere with the spirit and end of religion. Therefore the gospel disclaims interference with civil government, and submits to be subservient to the good order of society, to promote and maintain due subordination, without assuming any positive direction of civil policy or administration. It only will not submit to

be silent: it will rather endure persecution than not be preached. When the authority of earthly rulers commanded the apostles not to preach, they replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Yet if opposition seems insurmountable; if persecution rises to violence; or if perseverance might produce evil rather than good, prudence, meekness and forbearance, must be exercised. In such a case the apostles yielded quietly to what seemed the will of God, and went cheerfully to another country or to another city.

THEIR doctrine on this subject is entirely correspondent with their practice: "They were wise as serpents, harmless as doves." They studied to give no offence, that the ministry might not be blamed.

PAUL spake with respect both of, and to kings and governors. Even in his appeal to Cæsar there is a substantial acknowledgment of, and submission to legal form, authority and order. His doctrine and Peter's, though writing in distant countries, and on different occasions, are the same. Peter wrote to Jews and Christians dispersed over Asia—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors." Paul wrote to the people of Rome—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works,

"but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the
 "power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have
 "praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to
 "thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be
 "afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is
 "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath
 "upon him that doth evil. Wherefore ye must needs
 "be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience
 "sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also; for they
 "are God's ministers, attending continually upon this
 "very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute
 "to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear
 "to whom fear, honour to whom honour," &c.

RESPECT prepares the human mind, and disposes it to
 attachment and confidence. Respect, attachment, and
 confidence, gradually produce reciprocal dispositions in
 those, whether individuals or public bodies, to whom they
 are directed. Such is a natural and solid foundation for
 alliance between church and state. Jesus Christ and his
 apostles taught the church to respect and obey the state.
 The state feels this grateful and useful. It is liable to
 corruption, and hath been frequently abused: The church
 hath sometimes usurped the dominion, which she professed
 to support and to trust: At other times, the state has
 debased religion, and converted it into a mere tool of
 policy. But the most natural and interesting relations
 and privileges; every thing valuable and precious, is thus
 liable to abuse; yet their real importance is not on that
 account diminished, nor is their use therefore to be re-
 jected.

FROM the manner in which Christianity was introduced into the world, we cannot expect any intimate connection with it and the civil government. Its nature and design were purely spiritual and moral; to regenerate the principles, to reform the manners, to promote the righteousness, and to secure the happiness of men. It was of course opposed to former principles and practices, to all that was disorderly and wicked, to all the means of human debasement and wretchedness. Ancient philosophy and superstition, therefore, ancient customs and prejudices, vice and folly, in every form and in every quarter; philosophers, magistrates, priests and people, every where, set themselves against its propagation and success. The first Christians, therefore, were not cherished and protected, but hated and persecuted. The first churches were not incorporated with civil government, but watched with a most jealous eye, and occasionally were dissolved and dispersed. Their worth was long unknown, their most precious doctrines were ridiculed, their most important precepts were deemed paradoxical, and their friendship was despised.

MEANTIME Christians associated themselves together: Their common principles and hopes, zeal and sufferings, united them. They were united especially by that Christian love, which is the inspiration and glory of the gospel of Christ, by their common interest and danger, and by those occasions and emergencies which suggested the expediency of joint consultation. Their persecution and dispersion generally contributed to the propagation of Christianity: wherever they came they preached the gospel, and numbers were daily added to the church.

NEW associations, or churches, by these means, were formed in every quarter. The same religious and moral principles, and similar ecclesiastical regulations, governed them all. Cases of general concern or difficulty, were submitted to the representatives of the whole Christian church; and the decrees of these representatives, as at Jerusalem, (Acts xv.) were received as binding laws. Their increase, their union, and influence, were gradually felt and respected over all the Roman empire. At last they overcame all opposition: the state offered its alliance; and, in little more than three hundred years, Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire.

THE history from that period downwards, for at least a thousand years, is an argument, not against the civil Establishment of Religion, but against the invasion of the civil by the ecclesiastical power. As the Roman empire declined, the papal power arose: the decay of literature increased the influence of superstition: the aggrandisement of the church, by these means, was the oppression of Europe. Under this oppression, the energy of the human mind seemed relaxed, almost beyond recovery. Its extreme depression and imbecility, however, served only to show, that there is a point of vibration which human affairs are permitted by Providence to reach, whence by various concurring causes, and these sometimes arising from the very circumstances of extremity, they are made to return to vigour and prosperity.

THE arrogance and tyranny of the papal power counteracted their own purpose: the minds of men, galled by the fetters of superstition, became indignant:

rays of light pierced the thick dark cloud: literature, liberty, true religion, all began to feel their native life and power, and combined to assert the freedom and dignity of the human mind, and the supremacy of Divine Revelation.

A considerable part of Europe thus revived, protested against the papal dominion, and attempted a general Reformation. They reformed their creed, their ecclesiastical, and, in some measure, their civil and political constitutions: but all of them formed some alliance between religion and the state.

THEIR alliance was formed during great religious and political struggles and convulsions. Religious men were zealous to rid themselves of ecclesiastical bondage: worldly men were not only prompted by avarice to seize ecclesiastical property, but by ambition to increase their own political influence, and by patriotism to give weight and stability to both church and state. These principles, apparently opposite, united in this case, not only to assert the civil and religious liberties of men, but to maintain and defend them. They devised modes of government according to their comparative preponderancy; according to their superior love of themselves, of their country, or of religion; according to the degree of influence possessed by the prince, the nobles, the clergy, or the people; and according to their degree of attachment to the former customs and prejudices of their respective countries. In this they all agreed to incorporate the religious with the civil government. All of them may have some imperfection attending them; for what is there in human af-

fairs that is perfect? They generally bear the impressions of the times in which they were formed and compacted: of ambition in the prince; of antipathies and violence in the people; of pride and avarice in the nobles; or of fastidiousness and excessive zeal in the clergy. Such constitutions, like the works of native genius, composed in the moment of inspiration and ardour, must not be thrown aside on account of some blemishes which may be attached to them, but by favourable opportunities, and patient deliberation, will be improved, and carried, as far as humanity will admit, to perfection. It is unnecessary here to enlarge on the origin and progress of our admirable, united, civil and ecclesiastical constitution; on the providential occurrences, and remarkable events, by which it has so often been favoured, and advanced to its present maturity. It is the growth of ages, fostered by the Divine care and providence, watched night and day by our fathers, and watered by their blood. Can it but be dear to us! Its fruits are sweet to our taste; and at this moment we may hope and say, "its leaves are for the healing of the nations." "With respect to ourselves in this island," says Mr. Burke, "we do not consider our Church Establishment as convenient, but as essential to the state; not as a thing heterogeneous and separate, something added for an accommodation, which we may either keep or lay aside, according to temporary ideas of convenience; we consider it as the foundation of our whole constitution, with which, and with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union: Church and State are ideas inseparable in the minds of Britons."

On the French Revolution.

SECTION III.

Of Religious Establishments in America.

IN South America the Establishments are generally Roman Catholic; and this is all that need be said of that extensive and populous country.

THE subject of the present inquiry is the state of the Christian church relative to the civil government in North America. It deserves the more attention, that it is perhaps the first great experiment which men have ever tried, whether the want of a National Establishment of Religion, be an advantage or not to civil society? It has been the subject of much philosophical attention, and of general anxiety. It has endured a trial now of twenty years, and some opinion may be formed, though no certain conclusion can be drawn.

BUT as the real state of ecclesiastical policy in North America is not generally known, it will be proper to take a view, first, of the relation in which it stands with respect to the United States; and, secondly, with respect to each of the States, as expressed in their several constitutions. The first of these is thus expressed: In the plan of a new constitution of the United States of America, agreed upon at a Convention held at New York, Sept. 17, 1787, Article VI. "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers,

“ both of the United States and of the several States,
 “ shall be bound by oath or affirmation to support this
 “ constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required
 “ as a qualification to any office or public trust under the
 “ United States.” I find nothing else in the laws of the
 United States relative to religion.

FROM a copy of the particular constitutions of the several states, published by authority, the greater part of the following extracts have been taken, and the rest from Morfe's American Geography, re-published at Edinburgh, 1795, a work of deserved respectability.

First. The State of NEW-HAMPSHIRE.

No notice is taken of religion in its constitution; but Mr. Morfe says, “ The churches in Newhampshire are
 “ principally for Congregationalists; some for Presbyterians and Baptists, and one for Episcopalians. Ministers
 “ contract with their parishes for their support. No parish is obliged to have a minister; but if they make a
 “ contract with one, they are obliged by law to fulfil it.
 “ Liberty is ever given to an individual of a parish to
 “ change their denomination, and, in that case, they are
 “ liberated from their part of the parish contract.”

Second. MASSACHUSSETS.

“ AUTHORISE and require the several towns, parishes,
 “ &c. to make suitable provision, at their own expence,
 “ for the institution of the public worship of God,
 “ and for the support and maintenance of public Pro-

“testant teachers of piety, religion, and morality, in all
 “cases where such provision shall not be made volunta-
 “rily.” Their test—“I A. B. do declare, that I believe
 “the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its
 “truth.”—*Constitution.*

MR. MORSE adds, that the Legislature requires the attendance of the subject on public worship. He gives the following state:

Congregationalists,	-	400 Churches.
Baptists,	- - -	84
Episcopalians,	- -	16
Friends or Quakers,	-	10
Presbyterians,	- -	4
Universalists,	- -	1
		<hr/>
Total,		515

IN the province of Main, which still forms a part of the State of Massachusetts, the people are moderate Calvinists, chiefly Congregationalists. In 1785 they had seventy-two religious assemblies, and thirty-four ministers only to supply them.

Third. RHODE-ISLAND.

THIS State retains the same constitution as was granted to it by Charles II. in which the people are said “to profess the true Christian faith, and not to be bound to conform to the public exercise of religion, according to

“the Church of England.” “All men, professing faith
 “in one Supreme Being, are equally protected by the
 “laws, and no particular sect can claim pre-eminence.”
Constitution.

“THEY pay no taxes for the support of ecclesiastics of
 “any denomination; and a peculiarity distinguishes this
 “state from every other protestant country in the known
 “world; no contract formed by the minister with his peo-
 “ple for his salary, is valid in law.” *Morse.*

Fourth. CONNECTICUT.

No notice is taken of religion in the constitution of
 this State.

“THE bulk of the people are Congregationalists. The
 “Episcopalian churches are respectable, and are under
 “the superintendence of a Bishop. And in 1784 there
 “were twenty-nine congregations of Baptists.” *Morse.*

Fifth. NEW-YORK.

THE constitution of this State, provides “for the free
 “exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and wor-
 “ship, without discrimination or preference within the
 “State, for all mankind; provided that the liberty of
 “conscience, hereby granted, shall not be so construed,
 “as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices
 “inconsistent with the peace and safety of the State.”

“ THERE are in this State 87 Presbyterian Congregations.
 66 Dutch Reformed do.
 30 Baptists.
 26 Episcopalians.
 20 Quakers.
 12 German Lutherans.
 2 Moravians.
 1 Methodist.
 1 Roman Catholic.
 1 Jews.

246 Total.

“ IN April 1784, the Legislature of this State passed
 “ an act, enabling all religious denominations to appoint
 “ Trustees, not less than three, or more than nine, who
 “ shall be a body corporate, for the purpose of taking
 “ care of the temporalities of their respective congrega-
 “ tions, and for the other purposes therein mentioned. The
 “ Dutch and Episcopal churches have large estates be-
 “ longing to them, confirmed by charter. The ministers
 “ of the other denominations are supported by contribu-
 “ tions, subscriptions, and pew or seat-rents.” *Morse.*

Sixth. NEW JERSEY.

“ THERE shall be no establishment of any one religious
 “ sect in this province, in preference to another. And
 “ no protestant inhabitants of this colony shall be denied
 “ the enjoyment of any civil right, merely on account of
 “ his religious principles; but all persons professing a be-
 “ lief in the faith of any protestant sect, who shall demean

“ themselves peaceably, under the government as hereby
 “ established, shall be capable of being elected into any
 “ office of profit or trust.” *Constit.*

“ FOR fifty Presbyterian congregations in this State, there
 “ are at present about twenty-five ministers. There are
 “ upwards of forty congregations of Quakers, thirty of
 “ Baptists, twenty-five of Episcopalians, twenty-eight of
 “ Dutch Reformed, besides a few Moravians and Metho-
 “ dists.” *Morse.*

Seventh. PENNSYLVANIA.

“ No man can be compelled to erect or support any
 “ place of worship, or maintain any ministry, contrary to,
 “ or against his own free will and consent. Nor can any
 “ man, who acknowledges the being of a God, be justly
 “ deprived or abridged of any civil right as a citizen, on
 “ account of his religious sentiments, or peculiar mode of
 “ religious worship.” And “ each member, before he
 “ takes his seat in the House of Representatives, shall
 “ make and subscribe the following declaration, viz. ‘ I
 “ do believe in one God, the creator and governor of
 “ the universe, the rewarder of the good, and the punisher
 “ of the wicked: and I do acknowledge the scriptures of
 “ the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine in-
 “ spiration.’ And no further, or other religious test,
 “ shall ever hereafter be required of any civil officer or
 “ magistrate in this state. And all religious societies or
 “ bodies of men, heretofore united, or incorporated for
 “ the advancement of religion and learning, or for other

“ pious and charitable purposes, shall be encouraged and
 “ protected.” *Constit.*

“ THE Quakers are most numerous in this state. Next
 “ to them the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Germans
 “ of various denominations.” *Morse.*

Eighth. DELAWARE.

“ EVERY person who shall be chosen a member of either
 “ House, or appointed to any office or place of trust, be-
 “ fore taking his seat, or entering on the execution of his
 “ office, shall take the following oath, or affirmation, if
 “ conscientiously scrupulous of taking an oath, viz. I
 “ A. B. do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus
 “ Christ his only Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God,
 “ blessed for evermore: And I do acknowledge the holy
 “ Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given
 “ by Divine inspiration.” “ There shall be no establish-
 “ ment of any one religious sect in this state in preference
 “ to another.” *Constit.*

THERE are in this State 21 Presbyterian Churches.

7 Episcopal do.

6 Baptist do.

4 Quakers do.

1 Swedish do.

Some Methodists.

ALL these denominations have free toleration by the
 constitution, and live together in harmony. *Morse.*

Ninth. MARYLAND.

“EVERY person appointed to any office of trust or
 “profit, shall, before he enters on it, subscribe a decla-
 “ration of his belief in the Christian religion. All per-
 “sons professing it, are equally entitled to protection in
 “their religious liberty. The Legislature may levy a
 “tax for the maintenance of religion.” *Constit.*

THE Roman Catholics, who were the first settlers in Maryland, are the most numerous religious sect. There are also Episcopalians, Presbyterians, &c. &c. In Baltimore, one of the most flourishing cities of America, the largest though not the capital of this State, there are near 11,000 inhabitants; but not more than one in five of these attend public worship of any kind. *Morse.*

Tenth. VIRGINIA.

IN 1785, the Assembly enacted, “that no man should
 “be compelled to support any religious worship, place,
 “or minister whatsoever; nor be enforced, restrained, mo-
 “lest, or burdened, in his body or goods, nor other-
 “wise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief;
 “but that all men should be free to profess, and by ar-
 “gument to maintain their opinions, in matters of reli-
 “gion; and that the same should in nowise diminish,
 “enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.” *Morse.*

Eleventh. NORTH CAROLINA.

“ THAT no person, who shall deny the being of God,
 “ or the truth of the protestant religion, or the Divine
 “ authority, either of the Old or New Testament, or who
 “ shall hold religious principles incompatible with the
 “ freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of
 “ holding any office, or place of trust or profit, in the
 “ civil department within this State.” — “ That there shall
 “ be no establishment of any one religious church or de-
 “ nomination in this State, in preference to any other.”
Constit.

THE inhabitants of Wilmington, Newbern, Edenton,
 and Halifax districts, making about three-fifths of the
 State, once professed themselves of the Episcopal church.
 Since the war, there may be one or two of the original
 clergy remaining, but at present they have no particular
 pastoral charge. Indeed the inhabitants in these districts
 seem now to be making the experiment, whether Chris-
 tianity can exist long in a country, where there is no vi-
 sible Christian church. Thirteen years experience has
 proved, that it probably cannot; for there is very little
 external appearance of religion among the people in ge-
 neral. *Morse.*

Twelfth. SOUTH CAROLINA.

“ THE Christian Protestant Religion shall be deemed,
 “ and is hereby constituted and declared to be *the Estab-*
 “ *lished Religion* of this State.” — “ The incorporated

“ societies of the church of England shall so continue,
 “ and enjoy the religious property now in their posses-
 “ sion. And encouragement is offered to other socie-
 “ ties to form themselves into similar corporations.”

THE people of this State, by the constitution, are to enjoy the right of electing their own pastors or clergy; and what is peculiar to this State, the minister, when chosen, is required by the constitution to subscribe the following declaration, viz. “ That he is determined, by God’s grace, out of the holy Scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved from the scripture. The people are required to attend public worship.” *Constit.*

Thirteenth. GEORGIA.

“ THE Representatives of the House of Assembly shall
 “ be of the Protestant Religion.”—“ All persons what-
 “ ever shall have the free exercise of their religion, pro-
 “ vided it be not repugnant to the peace and safety of
 “ the State.” *Constit.*

THE greater part of this State is not supplied by ministers of any denomination. *Morse.*

Fourteenth. VERMONT.

“ EACH member of the House of Representatives, be-
 “ fore he takes his seat, must declare his belief in one

"God, in future rewards and punishments, and in the
 "Divinity of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testa-
 "ment, and must profess the Protestant Religion."—
Morse.

FOLLOWS an Abstract of the above:

	No Religious Creed.	Faith in God.	Faith in the Gospel.	Faith in the Old & New Test.	Faith in the Protest. Religion.	No provision for the Clergy.	Have confirmed provision made before the war.	Made new provision.	Full Establishment.	Use a Formal Test.
1. Newhampshire	I					I				
2. Massachussets									I	I
3. Rhode Island		I				I				
4. Connecticut	I					I				
5. New York	I						I	I		
6. New Jersey					I	I				
7. Pensylvania				I			I			I
8. Delaware				I		I				I
9. Maryland			I					I		I
10. Virginia	I					I				
11. North Carolina				I		I				
12. South Carolina									I	
13. Georgia					I					
14. Vermont				I	I					I
Total	4	I	I	4	3	7	2	2	2	5

FROM the preceding account of the particular constitution of the several States, in respect of religion, it appears,

FIRST, That the convention of the United States, Sept. 17, 1787, must have found it difficult or impossible, however desirous they might otherwise have been, to have enacted any thing in favour of religion, that should have suited all the States; and a religious test must have been incompatible with several of their constitutions. Hence they simply declare, That all public officers shall be bound by oath, or affirmation: but that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

SECONDLY, The United States being a confederation, formed for the purpose of external policy and protection, rather than of internal œconomy and regulation, the nature of religion, and the provision suitable for its maintenance, is not in the first instance the proper subject of its attention; and no inference for or against religion ought to be drawn on this account from its conduct, in so early a period especially, of its history.

THIRDLY, North America does not appear, from this inquiry, to be an absolute exception from the general doctrine founded on history, That no people have existed, or are likely to exist long, without a Religious Establishment. By the preceding table there are, out of fourteen States, but four who have no religious creed or public legal faith; and but seven who have no provision for the maintenance of the ministers of religion: five States for-

mally use tests; and two States seem to want nothing essential to a full Establishment of Religion. The greater number, indeed, of the States, may be included within the definition of a Religious Establishment given in the introduction to this Inquiry.

FOURTHLY. It remains to observe the consequences of the want of a full and universal Establishment, on the morals and good order of the people. The experiment is not yet of sufficient duration to demonstrate the absolute necessity of it; but the probable issue is becoming every year more apparent. Mr. Morfe, the able and judicious author above mentioned, observes repeatedly the increasing evils, in most of the States, arising from the want of Established Religion. Every intelligent observer, on returning from America, remarks the same thing. Their testimony is corroborated by letters. A gentleman of considerable literature and rank in America, writes as follows, June 1798, and his facts may be depended on:

“IN consequence of the want of a Religious Establishment in America, infidelity increases, and the very semblance of religion decays rapidly. The congregations are fewest, where the population is greatest, and are not likely to increase. Many Presbyterian ministers have been dismissed by their congregations, without any complaint, either against their life or doctrine. There are only three Presbyterian congregations in Philadelphia, all which were erected under the English government. They have been endeavouring, for these thirty years past, to erect a fourth congregation, but have not yet been successful. As there is no professor of divinity in any of the semina-

ries of this country, students put themselves under the care of any minister that they choose. Every minister in the country, is also a farmer, and has more dependence on his farm than on his stipend, for his subsistence. For although congregations in the country, subscribe at an average for about ninety pounds sterling a year, for their minister, yet subscribing and paying are two very different things in this country. No law can oblige the subscribers to pay their subscriptions, as they sometimes ask time, and when that is expired, they plead the statute of limitations. A country minister, therefore, generally speaking, is obliged to work at the plough and waggon, like another farmer; for servants do little work in this country, and most of them can only spare two hours, on Saturday's afternoon, to prepare their sermons, and to instruct their students in divinity.

“THE regular meetings of presbytery are in the spring and fall, like your synods. I have just now before me the list of our synods, presbyteries, licentiates, vacancies, and congregations, as published by our General Assembly this year (1798), the numbers of which, I communicate to you, with this observation, that as no commissioners appeared from five presbyteries, the lists of these are copied from last year. The presbyterian church in America is divided into four synods, viz. New York, Philadelphia, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

THE SYNOD OF NEW YORK.

Presbyteries.	Congreg.	Minist.	Vacancies	Licent.	Ministers having no charge.
1. Dutchess	14	8	7		1
2. Long Island	15	15	3		3
3. New York	23	19	4		
4. New Brunswick	32	17	17	3	2
5. Albany	31	13	18	2	
Total	115	72	49	5	6

THE SYNOD OF PHILADELPHIA.

Presbyteries.	Congreg.	Minist.	Vacancies	Licent.	Ministers having no charge.
1. Philadelphia	17	14	4	2	1
2. Newcastle	20	13	10	6	3
3. Baltimore	13	15	4	1	6
4. Carlisle	28	19	13	4	4
5. Lewis	1	4	9		1
6. Huntington		11	No report	1	2
Total	90	76	40	14	17

THE SYNOD OF VIRGINIA.

Prefbyteries.	Congreg.	Minist.	Vacancies	Licent.	Ministers having no charge.
1. Redstone	21	8	13	1	
2. Ohio	15	9	6		
3. Hanover		10	No report	No report	3
4. Lexington		9	No report	No report	1
5. Winchester		5	No report	No report	
Total	36	41	19	1	4

THE SYNOD OF THE CAROLINAS.

Prefbyteries.	Congreg.	Minist.	Vacancies	Licent.	Ministers having no charge.
1. Orange		9	No report	No report	
2. South Carolina	27	16	11		2 Colleg.
3. Abingdon		4	No report	No report	2
4. Concord	21	14	7	5	2
5. Hopewell	10	4	6	1	
6. Union		6	No report	No report	1
7. Transylvania		5	No report	No report	
Total	58	58	24	6	5
Total Four Synods	299	247	132	26	32

“ THERE are many instances of suppression of congregations from parsimony and indifference; and some of the vacancies proceed from the same cause. I know one congregation that has been vacant forty-five, and another forty-seven years, yet both these are abundantly able to support a minister, and one of them has a fund that yields two hundred pounds sterling of yearly interest. There are no instances of public worship being restored, after being laid aside. Many large tracts of country have no worship of any kind. In many places there are few children that have been baptized, and even among the Episcopal, in the southern states, this ordinance begins to be laid aside. The state of Vermont is divided into townships of six miles square each, in the midst of which are two farms left vacant, one for the first minister that shall be settled there, and his heirs, and the other to said minister and successors in office. A proportion of grain is assessed on each farm for the maintenance of the minister, but it rests with the people whether they will have a minister or not. And, in the first instance, the question, “ A minister or not?” was carried only by a few votes. In Kentucky there are only five Presbyterian ministers, the most of the people being Anabaptists, except a few Episcopal and Roman Catholics, and many of no religion. The Methodists and Anabaptists itinerate much in the southern states. The Methodists are greatly diminished since the death of Mr. Wesley. Universalists abound in all the states, but chiefly among those who attend no public worship. The Episcopal have endeavoured to increase the number of their bishops, if not of their congregations. Boston, Connecticut, Philadelphia, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, have now

a bishop in each, but their revenues are much less than any of those in England. Virginia, a country as large as England, was divided into fifty-five parishes; but as the most of the ministers left the country during the war, they have about thirty ministers in all the State, and very few in North or South Carolina. There are three Episcopal congregations in Philadelphia, and hardly ten besides in all the rest of this State. One minister has three congregations at about thirty miles distance."

IN reflecting on the whole historical facts, contained in these three sections, it is obvious to remark, that there is a tendency in churches and nations, as well as in individuals, to run into extremes. Either the church appears servilely subject to the state, or the state to the church. It does not seem owing to any degree of either rudeness or refinement. The Celtic Druids, the Persian Magi, and the Christian Bishops, have equally in their turn subjected the sceptre to the mitre. The Roman Consuls and Mahometan Imams, on the other hand, converted religion into the mere tool of civil policy, and reduced deities and priests, to the insignificant character of puppets, moveable according to the temporary and prevalent passions and caprice of men.

THE preponderancy of either must be owing entirely to the circumstances of the times, to the comparative knowledge and character of the clergy and laity, and to the estimation in which religion and learning were held by them respectively. The Celtes and the early Romans were, it is probable, equally rude: but the latter appear

more constantly active, and engaged in war from their origin as a people. Activity is unfavourable to superstition, and tends to cherish freedom and independence. The Roman warriors encouraged the superstition of the priests and of the people, but they were generally themselves superior to its influence. The sacred college had nothing professional that favoured liberal study; and few or none of them ever rendered themselves respectable for their learning.

THE Druids and the Magi, among nations more relaxed and settled, occupied themselves with other studies than those of their mere profession. They were poets, historians, lawyers, or astronomers, as well as priests. Their mind was thus more enlarged and cultivated. It was necessary to consult them in almost every matter of importance, civil as well as religious: they were able gradually to take advantage of the dependence and respect of the people, and to advance their own influence and power to an extreme.

AMONG the other circumstances which aggrandized the Christian priesthood, was their learning, when literature had declined among all the other orders of men, and the veneration with which they were generally respected, by the rude invaders of the Roman empire. When a prince or an emperor was incapable of reading, or even of subscribing his own name, it is no wonder that he honoured and submitted often to the opinions of those who must have appeared the oracles of knowledge.

BUT the Mahometan system, which commenced with the sword, and uniformly aimed at worldly dominion,

never could look on religion or its ministers, in any other light than as subservient to conquest, and to civil government.

HENCE we may admire the wisdom of the gospel, which, at the same time that it promotes and maintains good order and government, disclaims worldly ambition. Its ministers, therefore, cannot be too careful to cultivate its spirit, to be diligent in their own office, and to be watchful against the usurpation of power.

BUT neither is it the interest of civil officers, to disregard nor to degrade them nor their functions; and it is ultimately dangerous, however immediately convenient it may seem, to subject them to the schemes and enterprises of worldly policy. These observations seemed too important to be omitted on this occasion.

BUT the principal conclusion, intended to be drawn from the induction of historical facts in the preceding pages, is, that as Religious Establishments are universal, it must be owing to something in human nature and society, or to the reasonableness and necessity of the thing on trial. With a view to this conclusion, it was necessary to take an extensive view of ancient and modern, of heathen as well as Christian nations, to shew, that some kind or mode of religion, however debased in quality, however small in degree, is necessary to the existence of society; and that certain ordinances and established regulations and provision are necessary to the existence of religion. These ideas we shall still pursue in the following Sections, and next attempt to trace them in human nature and society.

SECTION IV.

Religious Establishments are founded in Human Nature and Society.

RELIGION is natural to man. Its sentiments rise towards their proper object, as readily as the feelings of our corporeal relations. As the appetites are excited by the view of food, &c. as the social affections are stirred within us by meeting with our fellow-creatures and kindred; so the great objects of nature, and the awful events of Providence, move our religious affections. In the wild desert, in midnight darkness, where tranquillity and solitude invite the mind to serious reflection: in great personal or relative distress, when no human aid can bring relief: in the awful tempest, when the wearied mariner finds all his skill and exertions vain: in the thunder storm which shakes and unhinges the soul: amidst popular tumults or national revolutions, which human foresight and authority can by no means direct nor controul, every man feels a sense of his dependence on a Supreme Ruler, before whom he bows, and to whom, with earnestness and importunity, he cries for protection and aid. Nor is fear, though wisely the most prompt and powerful, the only principle that suggests our relation to Deity. There are seasons of brightness and serenity, of success and joy; there are peculiarly suitable benefits, and remarkable escapes and deliverances, which lift the soul to God in warm and solemn acknowledgment. This relation to Deity, the foundation of all religion, which precedes all

reasoning, though capable of being improved by it, has been manifested and acknowledged universally among men.

FOUNDED deep in our nature, then, religion possesses a native influence and authority over all the powers of the mind: It would reduce them to order, and would regulate their energy and motions, in all the intercourses of society, and transactions of life; but its influence is not generally felt, its authority is not habitually regarded by the depraved mind "dead in trespasses and sins." Enlightened by Divine revelation, revived by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the soul of man lives anew, and submits to live under subjection to the principles and laws of the gospel. Fear and gratitude, shame and sorrow, love and hope, moved by the clear views of our Divine relation, communicated to us by the doctrines of scripture, and by the co-operation of the Spirit of God, resume their native and Divine influence, and restore man to rectitude and peace. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These principles, and often these only, can controul the power of appetite, can subdue the violence of passion, can restrain the extravagance of fancy, can regulate and govern the disordered soul. And when the laws of civil society are either too feeble to prevent intended crimes, or cannot at all reach the sentiments on which the criminal intention is founded, the power of religion overawes the sinner. He believes and fears the omnipresence of a holy and just God: he dreads even the present judgments with which Providence may visit him: he feels a dignity in his relation to God through Jesus Christ, a gratitude and love to

him, which exalt him above every vicious and base sentiment and action. Shall I offend such goodness? Shall I incur the displeasure, and lose the enjoyment of such excellence? Shall I obscure, if not lose, my hope of future happiness and glory, for a momentary pleasure, for dishonest gain, for uncertain honour or power? "What shall it profit me to gain the whole world, and to lose my soul?" Indignant he rejects the proffered temptation, and with prayer to God, and trust in him, he firmly resolves to hold fast his integrity. In proportion to the number of individuals, who grow up thus under the influence of these principles, and this spirit, society must improve. Justice and truth, fidelity and confidence, respect and obedience, submission and order, will prevail, attended by all the soft and amiable dispositions of love and compassion, of meekness and gentleness, of patience and forgiveness. Religion thus descending from heaven, not only dignifies and blesses man with a Divine relation, but diffuses its spirit and energy over all his principles of action and conduct in life.

SOCIETY must always partake of the character of individuals. If they are vicious, it will be dissolute: if they are righteous, it will be orderly and peaceful. Hence the importance, even in a social and political view, of cultivating and maintaining, of duly regulating and establishing, those means which are best calculated to promote at once the personal and the social, the political and the eternal interest of man. The duty of Christians is uniformly and universally, to show and prove the excellence of their religion; and the duty of civil rulers is,

by suitable regulations and provision, to encourage and protect them.

THE consideration of the social nature of man will lead us to the same conclusion.

EVERY thing in which man is interested, exhibits his social dispositions. His pleasures and pains, his joys and sorrows, all labour to be communicated. We are endowed with the corresponding and amiable power of sympathy, by which we are qualified to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep."

By condolence, sorrow is relieved or mitigated; and the heart of him who shares it is also made better. By congratulation, enjoyment is increased; and happiness, without any diminution in him that hath it, is copiously diffused by sympathy over his friends who take an interest in his joy. In almost any case, human happiness is but half enjoyed, and human misery is doubled, in solitude. Hence men are not merely disposed by instinct, like other herding animals, but are impelled, by the desire of relief from suffering, and by the desire of augmenting and spreading their joys, to associate.

THE power of social principle is heightened, its course and effects are regulated, by the accession of pure and undefiled religion. The religious and social principles reciprocally strengthen and adorn each other. The gospel commands, and beautifully exemplifies mutual love. It presents and applies motives the most powerful, to enforce all the duties of benevolence. To these it constrains us by the gratitude due to him, "who loved us, and who

“gave himself for us.” On the faithful discharge of these it rests our present comfort and order, and our assurance of future heavenly communion and joy.

RELIGIOUS and social affections thus grow up together. Society is regulated and improved by piety; and piety is greatly improved by social and public worship. He who made man, and knows well his frame, and best interest, hath therefore commanded us, “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;” and hath added the gracious promise, “Wherever two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

CIRCUMSTANCES of expediency will always have much influence to induce men of like minds to associate in religion, for the purposes of conversation, of instruction, and devotion: “They who fear the Lord will speak often one to another.” Many require instruction; others require the truths which they know to be brought often to their remembrance. Few are qualified without education, study, and habitual practice, to preside in the public exercises of religion. One duly qualified, may serve many, both for administering instruction, and for conducting devotion. Not only Christians indeed, but all men, a few solitary beings excepted, in all ages, have been accustomed to assemble for religious worship.

SUCH assemblies require external protection, and internal regulations. They require an order of men to be educated and trained to preside in them, and of course such a provision for their maintenance, as may encourage

and secure persons of suitable talents and character, to devote, and timeously to qualify themselves, for that profession. Good rulers, therefore, who are a praise and protection to them who do well, will, in consulting the true interests of society, not merely respect religion, but provide for its maintenance, and generally promote its decency and order.

IN one respect, civil and religious society is the same. We may speak and treat of them as separate and distinct bodies; and so they are as to their exercises and objects; but the same individuals are subjects and members of both. Legislators and rulers, magistrates and citizens, are also moral and religious beings, and church members. The church and the state are thus substantially one. Their separation is speculative, but impracticable. God hath joined them together in nature: his providence superintends and promotes their union; and the history of nations demonstrates, that they cannot exist, at least that they never have existed asunder.

CONGREGATIONS have nearly the same disposition to associate, and they have the same reason for associating, as individuals; for they are composed of persons who ought not to differ much in their corporate, from their personal capacity. They associate, or they confederate, on the same principle as townships and provinces. Protection, order, stability, requires it. This, when carried to any extent, were to be dreaded by the civil government on a detached and independent plan. Any large associations, a general confederacy within the state, but separate from it, must occasion frequent jealousies and ap-

prehenſions, unfavourable to internal tranquillity and proſperity. Wherefore, as the tendency to aſſociate congregationally, as well as individually, is natural, and cannot be prevented, and as an eccleſiaſtical combination, unconnected with the civil conſtitution and government, might be hazardous, there is a natural and reaſonable anxiety to promote the ſocial diſpoſition ſtill farther, to incorporate the church, and at the ſame time to blend its conſtitution with that of the ſtate.

THE ſtrength and vigour of the whole body conſiſts in their being thus united, and firmly compacted together. Their limits, in ſome points ſcarcely definable, run into one another by an inſenſible junction. Such is the admirable ſyſtem of the human conſtitution: one ſpirit, united with the body, diffuſes itſelf over all its members, and animates and directs them, whether engaged in the exerciſes of religion, or in the buſineſs of civil life.

THIS union may excite envy in rival ſects, which cannot be prevented: inſtead of being injurious to them, however, the union is ſalutary. Numerous ſects, equally privileged, without any acknowledged aſcendancy in any of them, might produce jealousies and contentions, calculated to engage too much the public mind, and to diſturb the ſtate. Theſe are in a great meaſure prevented by the alliance or union with one of them the moſt numerous, or on the whole the moſt reſpectable.

THE permiſſion of the other ſects, in the free and undiſturbed exerciſe of their various ſyſtems of faith and modes of religious worſhip, is toleration. This is as

reasonable and necessary for the good of the state, as the church establishment. It encourages population, free inquiry, and all that ease, openness, and activity of mind, so desirable by man, so well calculated to promote his personal comfort and improvement, and to preserve and maintain the good order and harmony of both church and state. Any unnecessary restriction disgusts and frets a generous spirit, cramps the human faculties, cherishes discontent and sedition, and partakes of persecution for conscience sake, the most inhuman and impolitical of all exercises of power.

SECTION V.

*Of Causes which seem to unite Religious and Irreligious Men,
equally against Religious Establishments.*

IT is a remarkable and a curious fact, that there are periods of society in which men, who usually entertain antipathies against one another, lay these aside, and cordially conspire to attack and overthrow the ancient customs and ordinances, the constituted authorities, and generally the present subordination and order of society. It is not foreign to my subject, and may be profitable, to inquire into the causes of this wonderful union of extremes.

FIRST, It may be ascribed to a spirit of innovation.

NOVELTY hath a powerful influence on all men; but it operates more at some times, and on some tempers, than others. The first effect produced by it is wonder, which being an emotion agreeable in itself, excites the desire of repetition. It cannot be renewed by the same object: a succession of novelties is necessary to the continuance of this kind of pleasure. The passion grows by indulgence. When common changes lose their effect of novelty, those come to be desired, which are more distant, violent, and extraordinary.

THE design of this principle in our nature is kind and wise, to furnish us with a constant motive to inquiry and to diligence; to render us active and indefatigable in sur-

mounting difficulties, and in prosecuting the means of discovery and knowledge. It impresses deeply on the mind too, the ideas which wonder contemplates, or which active inquiry discovers. It animated the sanguine and restless mind of Columbus. It spread the sails, and inspired the courage, which first persevered in circumnavigating the world.

BUT the objects of novelty are various in their kind and value: They characterize, according to their nature and rank, the minds of those who pursue and enjoy them: They are mean and degrading; they are sublime and elevating; they are good and improving; or they are trivial, vicious, and ensnaring. The mind may be moderate in the pursuit of them; or it may run into extravagance.

THE same principle of novelty operates in the love of change, in respect of place, rank, and condition, though not so universally as in respect of objects. Instead of pleasure, the indolent feel almost as great a horror at the idea of change of situation, as the prosperous do at a change of condition. The regular exercise of the understanding, much experience, and the habit of attachment to whatever they have been long accustomed to, seem in many to oppose effectually the love of change.

BUT there are others of a temper somewhat opposite, who feed on novelty as their daily bread, who yet want the genius to invent for themselves new occupations and enjoyments, or opportunities favourable to their genius; who are totally dependent on others, on accidents and occurrences, for the mind's entertainment; who go about

continually begging news, and can scarce subsist a whole day without a mail: There are men fond of innovation, whose rank and affairs can scarcely suffer by a change, but may be improved by it: There are some men who are incapable of attachment, through the selfishness or the fickleness of their nature, or through the habit of versatility which they have acquired by constant changes in life. These, all eagerly expectant, are roused by the intelligence of a popular commotion, are elevated with the hope of a falling church, are ripe for promoting or enjoying a general revolution.

If this is a just description of human tempers and habits, then we may add, that they are to be found equally among religious and irreligious men. The former may not be aware that such a temper is wrong; for it is to be regretted, that the temper is too often the last thing, which even a serious Christian thinks of correcting. The latter are indifferent whether it be wrong or not. Christians may be acquainted with religion, without being politically wise: the more they have "of simplicity and godly sincerity," the less suspicious they may be of any ill intention in others, or of their becoming the dupes and the tools of designing men.

SOME are flattered with the hope of advancing the interests of religion by innovation, and are blinded with the specious names of independence, liberty, reform, &c. They are not aware of the more natural and certain consequences of political innovation, anarchy, infidelity, ruin!

ALL the experience which Satan, the great adversary and tempter of the human race, hath had, of the awful consequences of innovation, only renders him more zealous and daring, more sanguine and virulent against God and his church. Though his innovations in heaven threw him headlong into hell; though his success with Adam and Eve excluded them from Paradise, infected the earth with sin, and overcast the world with blackness and misery; though nations and generations, with their memorials, have perished by the love and delusions of innovation, yet neither is the great Deceiver of mankind discouraged, nor are bewitched, sinful men, more fearful of his devices. Christians themselves still trust too implicitly to the thoughts of their own hearts, though they ought to know that, undirected by the word and Spirit of God, they are only evil, and that continually; though they ought to know, that they are too often the suggestions and agents of Satan, hired, superintended, and prospered, by him who presides over "principalities" and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, "and spiritual wickedness in high places." Christians still venture to join with unprincipled men, whom Satan leads captive at his will, with scorers, "despisers of government, presumptuous, self-willed, who are not afraid to speak evil of dignities," with infidels and atheists, in undermining and overthrowing church and state, and entertain the hope that their design is good. Neither the characters of their new companions, nor the means which they propose, nor the unspeakable hazards which they run, or rather certain evils which shall befall, make them suspect that they are in league with the devil, and that the children of light, at his instigation, are zeal-

ous to extinguish their light, and to plunge the church in utter darkness. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." "My son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall arise suddenly, and who knoweth the ruin of them both."

A second cause, to which the union of religious and irreligious men against establishments may be ascribed, is benevolence. Than benevolence nothing surely can be more desirable and precious. It is the second general precept of the moral law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and it is practically the great principle of order and union, of prosperity and peace, in society. It is the type on earth, of that Divine goodness which diffuses its blessings over the universe.

THE Divine goodness, however, is always joined with, and directed by perfect knowledge and wisdom. Without these, goodness itself may become a source of evil, and dispense misery where it intended happiness. To design good, then, without knowing, and by wisdom approving both the means and the end, is dangerous. To suppose that any alteration whatever of circumstances, can render men perfectly happy in this world, and to attempt it in this view; to suppose poverty itself a greater evil than injustice, than avarice, than any wilful disorder; to suppose that enjoyment consists in wealth, or in general equality of property, rank and power, and to attempt ac-

cordingly the degradation of the higher, and the elevation of the lower orders of men; to suppose that human ordinances are oppressive, that government is tyranny, that an established church is a nuisance, and clerical maintenance an unnecessary burden; and to aim at their dissolution and dismissal, without knowing or wisely weighing all the consequences, is not the love which the moral law enjoins, is not the goodness of the Divine nature, of which Christians are called to be partakers: it is a speculative, romantic benevolence, the joint offspring of folly and presumption. It is the favourite topic, however, of ardent tempers, whether Christians or not, whether private persons or statesmen, whether of the German or of the Irish union. The specious name, the generous purpose, the sublime enterprize, is the net thrown out by the crafty, unprincipled politician; and in that snare, the well-meaning but thoughtless, the pious but simple, the charitable but imprudent, are taken.

A third cause, to which the union of religious and irreligious men against Establishments may be ascribed, is zeal for liberty. What can be more precious than liberty to ourselves, or more desirable for others? Sensibility and judgment readily unite in cherishing and promoting it. The pious and charitable, who have occasionally visited or heard of the shocking state and scenes of a prison; the benevolent in heart, who have read the glowing descriptions of the cruelty of slave traders; the citizen, who pants for reform; the statesman, who deplores the tyranny of administration, and the repeated and deep violation of the constitution; the dissenter, who is excluded from offices of trust, and the churchman, who groans under the

grievance of patronage; all unite in the desire of some more liberal system of policy and government, by which these evils might be remedied, and by which the blessing of liberty might be universally diffused and enjoyed. Every man, Christian or infidel, who feels personal or civil restraint, without considering liberally or wisely the reason and necessity of it, that some restriction is essential to liberty, declaims loudly on freedom, and declares every check and precaution, however wise and salutary, oppression. Were we to credit such men, the former times were better than these; now the glory of the British constitution is tarnished; liberty is, at this moment, stretching her wings, and about to flee for ever from her long favoured island. But what times were better than these? For at all times enthusiasts for liberty, and malcontents against government, have loudly concurred in similar declamations. The constitution in church and state was once destroyed, by a violent attempt to rescue religion and liberty from an oppressive government. After many years, when the good providence of God had restored and secured these invaluable blessings with the British constitution, were there no discontents? no violence of Whigs and Tories? no declamations against the oppression of government? no pantings for more abundant civil and religious liberty? no tendency to show the almost excess of it, by converting it into licentiousness? Bishop Butler, half a century ago, seems as if he were addressing the votaries of liberty, of all descriptions, of the present times: "Ingenuous youth," says he, (Serm. XVIII.) "may be warmed with the idea of a constitution against which nothing can be objected. But it is the strongest objection against attempting to put in practice

the most perfect theory, that it is impracticable, or too dangerous to be attempted. And whoever will thoroughly consider in what degree mankind are really influenced by reason, and in what degree by custom, may, I think, be convinced, that the state of human affairs does not even admit of an equivalent for the mischief of setting things afloat; and the danger of parting with those securities of liberty, which arise from regulations of long prescription and ancient usage; especially at a time when the directors are so very numerous, and the obedient so few. Reasonable men, therefore, will look upon the general plan of our constitution, transmitted down to us by our ancestors, as sacred, and content themselves with calmly doing what their station requires, towards rectifying the particular things which they think amiss, and supplying the particular things which they think deficient in it, so far as is practicable without endangering the whole." In every age, and wherever there is any sense or enjoyment of liberty, there is always an anxiety to maintain and increase it, and a jealousy lest rulers and princes should impair and destroy it. And, on the other hand, rulers have reason to fear the abuse of liberty, and in proportion to the degree in which it is enjoyed, find vigilance, and sometimes severe restriction, necessary. It is not the exhausted and stiff, but the spirited and wanton horse, which needs the tight and steady rein. The real love of liberty, reverences and supports authority, without which it could not exist, and chiefly at those times when the licentious spirit is most prevalent, not only in the nation but in the world; when a spirit of delusion seems to animate men of various characters; when principled and unprincipled, moral and vicious, religious and irreligious men, unite in the

common cry, 'Liberty is in danger!' when their imaginations, heated with the supposed magnitude of their object, and with their general co-operation represent the whole system as corrupted, and its dissolution necessary to national safety. The following passage of the same author above quoted, impresses the mind with awe, while, with a kind of prophetic spirit, it describes the principles and effects of which I am treating: "And is there no danger," says he, p. 395-6. "that all this, to mention only one supposable cause of it, may raise somewhat like that levelling spirit, upon atheistical principles, which, in the last age, prevailed upon enthusiastic ones? Not to speak of the possibility that different sorts of people may unite in it upon these contrary principles. And may not this spirit, together with a concurrence of ill humours, and of persons who hope to find their account in confusion, soon prevail to such a degree, as will require more of the good old principles of loyalty and religion to withstand it, than appears to be left among us. There are very bad things, which human authority can scarce provide against at all, but by methods dangerous to liberty, nor fully, but by such as would be fatal to it. These things shew, that liberty, in the very nature of it, absolutely requires, and even supposes, that people be able to govern themselves in those respects in which they are free, otherwise their wickedness will be in proportion to their liberty, and this greatest of blessings will become a curse."

A fourth cause of the union of religious with irreligious men against Establishments, is pride of understanding. The gospel invites and encourages men to exercise their

talents. It also furnishes them with important subjects, and frequent opportunities of exercising and improving them. If their talents are naturally good, they hereby rise above their fellows: they acquire confidence in judging, and without much prudence and humility, which even religious men may not always attain, they are in danger of over-rating their powers, and, on comparison, of treating others with haughtiness or disdain. This, with the respectability which their piety and good morals secures them, engenders not merely a spiritual pride, but a general disgust at human infirmity and imperfection, and a temper intolerant of any human institution, however venerable or useful, that is attended with any defect, or that is capable of any error. Confident of their own judgment, proud of their own wisdom, with no great range of knowledge or experience, they presume that they, and those with whom they associate in the community and nation, are capable, by a coup-de-main, to pull down the old fabric, and to rear pillars and edifices without a flaw.

THE pride of philosophy takes a different road towards the same end. It is fond of singularity, of new inventions, of improvement in science and in society. It will scarce admit, that the rudeness of our forefathers could devise any thing suitable to civilized society, and to the liberal sentiments of cultivated modern minds. They were little acquainted with the rights of men, with the true principles of education and government, with the enlarged policy and equality of free nations: Children, it is now affirmed, ought to be allowed, like Rousseau's *Emilius*, to teach and train themselves according to nature: That

every man, and every society, is independent, and answerable to no other, unless he, or it, offend directly and criminally against the state; and that such a Republic only as that of France is consistent with real liberty. These, and such like dogmas, being infallible, that other maxims, however ancient and venerable, fall of course to be trivial and childish: That the Proverbs of Solomon are not generally to be approved; and the admonitions of Paul favour of fanaticism: the scriptures in general reach too far into remote times to be credited; and, on the whole, are unsuitable to the profound knowledge and liberal manners of a polished people. It is vain, after such affirmations, to hope for any respect to the clergy, whose office originates in the doctrines of antiquity, or to think of maintaining, at the public and legal expence, a church favoured by, and favourable to such antiquated maxims and doctrines. The proud philosopher and the proud Christian thus both agree in this, that they could rear a structure in every view superior to the present civil and ecclesiastical constitution. Neither of them attends, very minutely, to the other's principles, leading to this common conclusion; but, where they meet, they cordially unite "to break down the sacred temple's carved work, "at once, with axes and hammers, to cast fire into God's "sanctuary, and to defile by casting down the dwelling- "place of his name to the ground."

It seems unnecessary farther to illustrate, to any extent, ambition, disappointments, &c. as causes of the union of religious and irreligious men against Religious Establishments. The desire of honour and power is common to both, and there may be a hope of gratifying it

by a new system of things, which is utterly excluded by the present state of subordination and government.

BOTH too are capable of the peevishness and resentment, which disappointed ambition and avarice occasion. Little prompting, therefore, is necessary to push them on together against their common adversary.

IN describing these different characters, and in shewing their tendency to unite in one scheme of policy, it is most distant from my intention to hurt or to offend truly religious men, or serious Christians. I venerate, and trust I ever shall venerate, the gospel, and all that is related to it. But the gospel resides among neighbours most unworthy of it, not only in the same country and church, but in the same heart. It associates with them, as Jesus did with sinners, in order to reclaim them. It does not profess, immediately on being believed, to conquer and subdue every depraved desire and vicious passion. It only promises gradually to regenerate, and finally in death to perfect the Christian in holiness. It remains true, then, that the best of men, the most serious Christians have depraved principles still abiding in them, and that they are still liable to prejudices, to follies, and to vices, which, sometimes, on meeting with favourable companions and circumstances, break forth into criminal intentions and acts. This I say not to encourage, but to warn them; not as an extenuation of the crime, but as an apology for the character.

AND if they admit the apology as just, there is one other apology which I would intreat them to graft on it:

It is this, that if Christians, even the best of them, are liable to temptations, to errors, and to vice, no man in any rank, high nor low, nor in any office, civil nor ecclesiastical, prince nor ruler, judge nor priest, can be, nor ought to be considered, as exempted from them. And if they are liable to temptations and errors, both of judgment and of heart, how can their administration be perfect, however sound and excellent the constitution may be which they administer? It is often admitted, that the constitution of church and state in Britain is good, if it were duly administered. The former ought indeed to be good, for it is the work of Providence: the latter never can be so good, for it is administered by men. It is no matter to what party or sect it is intrusted, if they be men they will err: those not intrusted will complain, and they will complain too with justice; but how shall their complaints be prevented or remedied? By intrusting the complainers? and then their opponents will complain with equal justice. Admit Fox, and Pitt will complain; admit the dissenters, and the church will complain; admit any one of a congregation, in place of the clergyman, and there will be still reason to complain. What then is the remedy? That every one study to be faithful in the discharge of his trust; to be thankful for the privileges which he enjoys; to make allowance for human infirmity, and to endure with meekness, patience, and candour, what cannot be remedied.

SECTION VI.

Permanent and legal Provision for the Maintenance of the Clergy, seems necessary to a Religious Establishment.

SELF preservation is the first and strongest law of our nature. We must be at ease under that law, before we can apply ourselves to any other subject with calmness and resolution. Every one who labours for another, whether with mind or body, is entitled to his reward. The sufficiency and security of the one, is the motive and encouragement to the other. If the reward or hire, is either insufficient or insecure, there will be a proportional anxiety, unfavourable especially to mental labour.

THE experience of mankind has shewn them, and any person may be satisfied who tries it, that severe bodily labour, besides the time which it occupies, incapacitates the mind for much thinking and extensive study. If the labourer and the artist, then, requires one to think and study for them, it is but reasonable that they share with him the profits of their labour and art; and, to preserve him from unnecessary anxiety on that subject, that they bind his share to him by a permanent and legal security.

THE Scriptures represent and urge the same thing. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine; for the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox

"that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for
 "oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our
 "sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he that ploweth
 "should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in
 "hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown
 "unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we
 "should reap your carnal things? Do ye not know, that
 "they which minister about holy things, live of the things
 "of the temple, and they which wait at the altar, are
 "partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord or-
 "dained, that they which preach the gospel, should live
 "of the gospel." "Let him that is taught in the word
 "communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

It may be said, that no man can conveniently continue
 always absorbed in study, and that it is better even for
 himself that he vary his pursuit. It is true that occasional
 relaxation and variety are useful, but they will have a
 very different effect on the mind of the student, as an
 amusement, and as a necessary business. In the one case,
 they refresh the mind and restore its energy; in the other,
 they continue to stretch and exhaust it.

SOME anxious, and other active minds, notwithstanding
 the provision made for them, as ministers, may occu-
 py themselves with other pursuits. It may be so with
 propriety; but let it be done voluntarily, and not from
 necessity. If an individual should abuse the liberality of
 provision made for the maintenance of religion, either by
 indolence on the one hand, or by the misapplication of his
 time and talents on the other, he is blameable; but society

ought not, for a few individuals, to be unfaithful to the church, by total neglect, nor by illiberal parsimony.

THE provision of the clergy ought not to depend on the bounty and will of those who employ them. A poor or dependent man is in danger of popular and mean arts, or of the suspicion of using them. Either of these is offensive and unfavourable to the success of his office. If he cannot recommend himself, so as to gratify the natural desire of respect by direct and honest means, principle may relax, and accommodate to the opinions, the prejudices, or passions of the multitude: Noise may be substituted for sense, tediousness and length for substance, and cant phrases for sound words.

THE labour of other professions may be measured, and receive a proportional reward; but how shall we measure the private as well as public anxiety, the pious affection, the prayers, the studies, the exhortations and reproofs, of a faithful pastor, so as duly to reward them. The most meritorious of his services, are often the least visible and the least acceptable. His reward ought not, therefore, to depend on men's caprice and temper, but ought to be stated and legal.

THERE is a rank in society which the ministers of religion should hold, suited to the dignity of their functions, and calculated to render them useful to all orders of men. It ought to be so elevated, as to prevent our associating with them any idea of meanness. Their very dress, and general appearance, neither shabby nor gaudy, but simple and decent, as nothing of that kind can render spiritual

worship more august, nor gratify the object worshipped, ought at least to have the effect of not at all catching nor disturbing the devout mind. Their intercourse with society ought to be general, among the lowest as well as the highest orders, that they may be equally useful to all. This will require either a subordination of rank among the clergy, as in England, or such a middle rank, as in Scotland, as enables them readily to associate with the great, or easily to condescend to men of low degree. None of them, however, ought to be dependent nor mean. For whatever may be pretended in speculation, it is certain, that men in general, have their opinions of respectability affected by riches and poverty. The poor and dependent man is always an object of nothing higher at most than pity; and if he attempts to exercise any thing like authority, that pity changes quickly into contempt. The sentiments of pity and contempt, ought not to be associated with those who administer religious instruction, or who conduct the exercises of devotion. A suitable provision, then, is necessary to the rank which the ministers of the gospel ought to hold in society.

BUT farther, it ought to be such, as, on comparison with other professions, will excite and maintain a moderate and reasonable ambition; such as will attract the notice, and secure the respect of young people. The temporal reward ought not to be the supreme motive, held out to engage them to devote their talents and lives to the ministry; but neither ought it to suffer, on comparison with the advantages of other occupations in society, but to produce the desirable effect of duly supply-

ing the church with ministers, without crowding its porches with too many expectants.

To this it hath been objected, (*Wealth of Nations*, vol. III. p. 193.) "That the exertion, zeal, and industry of the ministers of religion, are likely to be much greater, when they depend altogether for their subsistence upon the voluntary contributions of their hearers; and that the teachers of new religions, have always had a considerable advantage in attacking the systems of ancient Religious Establishments."

THE fall of old systems, by means of new ones, is not owing to the legal provision made for the former, and to the dependence of the clergy on the bounty of the people in the latter, but to the charms of novelty and change, and to the inflamed state of the passions, which innovation and resistance produce in both ministers and people. Indignation, zeal, fear, ambition, resentment, wrought up by opposition to their highest pitch, moved the Reformers, while pride of system, or contempt of their adversaries, or the restraint of inveterate custom and prejudice, rendered the ancient church an easy subject of humiliation and neglect. Passion will either ruin or rear an edifice; but passion cannot uphold it.

THAT the exertion, the zeal, and industry of the ministers of religion, are likely to be much greater when they depend altogether for their subsistence upon the voluntary contributions of their hearers: in other words, that dependence is the best excitement to industry, however plausible, will not hold in the office of a minister of the

gospel. We have already admitted, that the quantity of labour in other professions, may be measured and proportioned to the value. But the cares, the studies, and ministrations of the pastoral office, are invaluable. Besides, there is a premium due for many years previous study, in order to be qualified for the office. After long and patient labour and expectation, there ought, in respect of maintenance, to be rest and enjoyment. The mind quiet, and free from that kind of anxiety, should be occupied solely with the sublime and useful duties of religious doctrine and ministration.

THERE is no doubt, that an abundant and secure provision will afford temptation to neglect and indolence; for what is there in human affairs that is not liable to abuse? The question, however, is not, whether a legal maintenance may be attended with some inconvenience? but, whether the inconveniencies arising from it, or from the want of it, are greatest? If moderate, and suitable to the destined rank of the minister, it will afford no stronger temptation to pride and luxury, than might arise from the occasional applause and bounties of the people; or than the evils which might arise from their neglect, or from parsimony. Forced industry is more likely to be pernicious than successful, in the ministerial office. The dependent, broken mind, is liable to bend and crook with occurring circumstances and temptations: if unaccommodating, it grows sullen: altogether, it wants that interesting sweetness, and persuasive seriousness, which proceed from a heart unconstrained and cheerful in its duty, from an upright, unbiaised, and independent mind.

BESIDES, voluntary contributions are seldom long and steadily productive. The love of money, generally strong in the human breast, will not readily yield to common motives. It gives way to other affections and passions; only when they are somewhat excited. When they have subsided, it again usurps its former dominion. Other human passions are temporary, proportioned to their vehemence, but avarice is permanent, and yields uniformly to the sure prospect only of an abundant gain.

THE novelty, at first, of a minister's situation, and the generous glow of affection, both in him and his people, occasion, on both sides, extraordinary attentions and exertions. It is similar to the hospitality which we exercise to a stranger on his first entrance into our family, compared with the more easy and familiar attention which we show him, after he is sometime domesticated. The minister and people both settle into their ordinary, unexcited habits and tempers. It is fortunate if there shall be no vibration into the opposite extreme of indifference and neglect; not probably from any change or fault in the minister, but from the caprice and fastidiousness of the people. Some worthy dissenting ministers, both in England and Scotland, who were not secured in their stipend by a good and permanent bond, will acknowledge, that the hope inspired, and the sums and presents lavished on them, at their first settlement, gradually diminished, and finally left them in neglect and indigence. They grow old, perhaps, and less capable of discharging the duties of their office, though not less worthy, nor in want, of sympathy, of respect, and of the means of subsistence. The people,

however, ungenerously deserted them, and in some cases cruelly abandoned them.

OTHERS, it is known, have been tempted to secure the attention and generosity of their people, at the expence of their integrity, by mean condescensions, by vile flattery, by gratifying their whimsies, by accommodating to their opinions, by conniving at their vices. Are such temptations to be hazarded in the balance against all the advantages, though accompanied with the unavoidable imperfections, of an independent and legal provision?

WHEREFORE violent zeal may triumph over decaying Establishments; generous affection for a while may cherish the stranger, and may applaud the novelty; mean condescensions, and pernicious indulgence, may secure to some a liberal temporary maintenance; but a sufficient and legal provision, is the most reasonable reward, and honourable security, for the faithful and pious discharge of the ministerial office: it only annexes a suitable rank and dignity in society, to the station and character of the ministers of religion.

IN an Establishment, the indolence or unfaithfulness of some ministers may retard the general success of the gospel, may prevent its influence or obscure its lustre in the particular districts which they occupy. Without an Establishment, not only the same indolence and unfaithfulness may happen, but, through the want of due encouragement of those who are to administer the gospel, it must fall into low and illiterate hands; and the morals and

good order of society, as well as the eternal interests of men, must suffer.

IN either case religion herself will remain ever the same. The offspring of heaven, like her great Author, she is perfect and unchangeable. Though neglected and despised by one age or nation, she takes refuge in another, "going about," like Jesus, "continually doing good." Sometimes she has seemed to disappear, as if she had abandoned this earth, so unworthy, yet so needful, of her mercy and beneficence: but again we find her rising as the sun resplendent in another quarter of the world, assiduous and successful still in enlightening and blessing the human race.

THE question is of considerable importance, Whence should this provision for the maintenance of the clergy be derived? It is a maxim in politics, that the people should feel, as little as possible, the taxes imposed on them for the purposes of civil government. This maxim ought to have, at least, equal weight in matters of religion. Almost nobody denies the necessity of contributing to the one; but there are not a few disposed to think the other an unnecessary burden. Unconcerned alike about their own and others religious interests, avaricious or prejudiced, many will argue against religion, rather than contribute to promote it. They will change their sect, rather than relax their love of money. They care not for the decay of Christianity, provided no sacrifice be required of them.

to revive or support it. This is the case in several places in America where there is no Religious Establishment. When a vacancy happens, the inhabitants of the parish or district, allow the vacancy to continue, that they may be rid of the burden of maintaining a pastor. Hence, the maintenance of the clergy should neither depend on voluntary contributions, nor, though legally secured, should it be levied, if possible, from the private pocket, nor the personal property of the individual.

NEITHER does it seem expedient, that the clergy should receive their maintenance in the manner of civil and military officers, as a salary or pension from government. In regenerating their state, the French nation have seized the church lands and substituted pensions for them.

THIS mode of provision is attended with various inconveniencies. A salary or pension, once fixed by law, will not keep pace with the progress of society, with the varying state of money, and of manners. Government may not listen readily to proposals of augmentation. The salary or pension, which appeared ample in the beginning of a century, becomes totally inadequate before its conclusion. The insufficiency will fret the clergy, and irritate them against the state. Besides it would render them too dependent on government. They would feel a dependence, even on the public officers through whose department and hand their pension had to pass, as is too much experienced by those who do receive public salaries and pensions. On great emergencies, they are in danger of being diverted from the service of the church

to that of the state. Finally, the punctual payment, or occasional augmentation of these annual pensions, may prove an instrument in the hands of an insidious or arbitrary minister or sovereign, for depressing the clergy, or enslaving the church.

THESE things considered, it appears reasonable and necessary, that the maintenance of the clergy should arise, neither from the immediate contributions of individuals, nor from the public treasury, but from the soil. As the servants of the most high God, it seems most fit that it should be derived as directly as possible from his own hand. It is not easy, however, to say what may be the best modification of this general principle.

THE life-rent property of land, if occupied by the minister as life-renter, would require more stock than he generally has to lay out upon it, more anxiety and labour, and avocations, than is compatible with the faithful discharge, and proper habits, of his pastoral office. Or if he shall grant his life-rent in lease to others, his income will be too precarious. The failure of the crop or of the tenant, will involve him in unspeakable difficulties. The parish of Whitburn was an example of this. Within these few years, the heritors were advised to sell the lands, and to invest the price of them in some way less troublesome, and more certainly productive to the minister.

EXPERIENCE, in England, has shewn the tithes to be a vexatious and oppressive source of clerical maintenance. It is vexatious to all concerned; and it is particularly hard on the farmer, who, besides many other inconveni-

encies, must often leave his crop exposed till the Tithe-man shall be pleased to separate his part from the whole. From the Agricultural Reports, the tithes appear to be a general discouragement to improvement, and to occasion frequent and disagreeable contentions betwixt the clergy and their parishioners.

THE mode in which the stipend of the ministers of the Church of Scotland is secured and paid, seems, on the whole, well calculated to answer the end. The lands of every parish are burdened with the payment of the minister's stipend, out of what was originally the tithes. They are bought and sold always with this burden. It is not the proprietor, therefore, who pays the stipend, but the lands. It is payable in victual, or oat-meal, generally; but it may be converted yearly into money, at the rate of the market, or of the fiars. Neither the clergy nor the government, but a particular court, holding a permanent commission to that effect, judges of the reasonableness and quantity of the augmentation.

A scheme was proposed in America to obtain a legal maintenance for the clergy, without any preference of sects: That a tax should be levied for the general support of religion; that every man should pay according to his rank; but might mark the sum he paid, in a column to be appropriated to the sect which he most approved. This plan, however, is liable to various objections. It is contrary to the maxim formerly mentioned, that a tax should be as little visible as possible. It is extremely difficult and invidious, to rate men according to their rank

or property. Such a plan would not admit of dividing the country into parishes. Indecent jealousies, and endless contentions, would arise about the mode and quantity of the distribution among the various sects. And the greatest sum might be found payable to the sect, most troublesome and dangerous to the state.

It cannot be expected, in the present state of human nature, that a large body of people, such as form a nation, shall long agree in any one system of religious doctrines or form of worship. A system so liberal as to embrace all opinions, as that in Rhode Island for example, which requires the belief only of one God, wants some of the most essential principles for enforcing moral duty; and is likely sooner or later to be found attended with much inconveniency and danger. Such a test may include sects the most hostile both to real religion and good order.

AMONG many sects, and especially if any of them are unfavourable to good order and government, a test becomes necessary, not to brand nor to punish, but to distinguish, and if necessary to exclude from offices of trust or profit. The state invites, welcomes, and protects all denominations of men; but intrusts its public offices, and vouchsafes its peculiar privileges, to one description only of Christians. Are you who ask these privileges or offices of that description? Prove it by subscribing their creed. This is the test. That is, you thereby attest your faith to be the same with theirs; or if you do not subscribe, you do thereby attest that you entertain a

different faith, and consequently, that you cannot be fully confided in by the society who hold the reins of government. It is dictated by common sense, that every society may prescribe rules for itself. And if the majority of a nation shall chuse to fence in its church and state, by such bulwarks as creeds, confessions, and subscriptions, who has any right to complain? If others in the minority shall murmur, it is unreasonable, for they have received no injury. They do not chuse to relinquish nor to hazard their own peculiar opinions; and this is the very reason why they are excluded, because the other party do not chuse to hazard nor to relinquish theirs.

As creeds and confessions seem essential to a Religious Establishment, and as not only dissenters, but members of the Establishment, have occasionally opposed them, it may be proper to illustrate at some length their nature and importance.

ONLY it may be premised, that there is no doubt the church of Christ is catholic, and not confined to any one sect or description of Christians. It extends over the earth, and includes every real Christian of every denomination, whether in Greenland or Japan. Men will say, indeed, "Lo! here is Christ, and, Lo! there." Every man, of new and small sects especially, is disposed to think himself better than his neighbour, and to say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." This pride, prejudice, peevishness, and general want of mutual accommodation, separate men but externally, and for a season.

They only retire into different courts of the same great temple. And their respective creeds are the inscriptions which they place over the entrance to their several courts. They separate like peevish children: but they are all the children of God, who believe, and love, and obey Jesus Christ our Lord.

SECTION VII.

The Importance of Creeds, or Confessions of Faith and Subscription.

CREEDS and Confessions may be considered as synonymous. The former, however, is most usually applied to a shorter summary or formula of doctrines, and the latter to a longer and more minute enumeration of them, and of their relations to the controversies arising from them.

THEY may be considered as serving a similar end, in respect of the scriptures, as the title which precedes any book or chapter: they state its principal subjects or contents. In receiving or acknowledging them, we declare that we believe these to be the great subjects of revelation, and the essential doctrines of our salvation.

THE scriptures often exemplify this kind of summary, and signify the importance of attending to them. The moral law, declared to be exceeding broad, is summed up in the ten commandments. The many subjects, and general manner of prayer, are comprehended in what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Jesus sums up the gospel in these words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The apostles may be said to have written their epistles as abridgments of the gospel. In these again, and in the Acts of the Apostles, we find such summaries as these,

“ Testifying repentance towards God, and faith towards
 “ our Lord Jesus Christ.” “ When the fulness of time
 “ was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,
 “ made under the law, to redeem them that were under
 “ the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”
 “ Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the
 “ flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached
 “ unto the Gentiles,” &c.

IN allusion, most probably, to some such summary of doctrine, the apostle to Timothy writes—“ Hold fast
 “ the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of
 “ me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.”
 “ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that
 “ thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed
 “ in God might be careful to maintain good works.
 “ These things are good and profitable unto men. But
 “ avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and conten-
 “ tions, and strivings about the law, for they are unpro-
 “ fitable and vain.” “ Hold fast the profession of your
 “ faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath pro-
 “ mised.” “ Hold the mystery of faith in a pure con-
 “ science.” “ Continue grounded and settled in the
 “ faith, and unmoved from the hope of the gospel which
 “ you have heard.” “ Whosoever transgresseth, and
 “ abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.”

THEY tend to promote and maintain knowledge and Christian communion. To read and understand the scriptures, is by many deemed an easy undertaking, which, therefore, they delay as a thing which they can do at any time. Others suppose it an enterprize beyond their

power, and for that reason do not so much delay, as despond and abandon it. The books appear numerous, and the things contained in them without order. Few people are capable of arranging for themselves. A well digested compend will undeceive and relieve them. It will present the subjects which they ought to study and know, in such a light as may check the presumption of the vain, as may encourage the timid, and aid those who are incapable of arrangement. It will not only state the several objects of faith, but the relation which they bear to one another, and to the various other subjects of knowledge. All the doctrines, with their several relations, being thus brought within a narrow compass, may be frequently perused, may be even committed to memory, and made the common topics of secret meditation and enjoyment.

So familiar an acquaintance is most likely to become a friend; and we know how readily we overlook any trivial blemish or apparent fault, how instantly we suppress any undue suspicion, with what resolution and firmness we repel any insinuation or unjust charge, which may be laid against our friend.

THEY tend to discover the common friends of the same faith to one another, and to unite them. Suspicion and reserve, the effects of ignorance and prejudice, give place to openness and intimacy on acquaintance. Men of like minds, in the same neighbourhood, associate: such as are more distant, enjoy spiritual fellowship with one another, through the faith of the same doctrines, and the love of the same God and Saviour. They strengthen and

confirm each other, and yield a mutual satisfaction and enjoyment. The increase of the body of Christ is rendered more visible; the power of imitation and emulation is proportionally great; and there is joy on earth and in heaven over the multitude of sinners who repent.

CREEDS and Confessions, in fact, remove rather than revive prejudice and party spirit. Darkneſs occasions fear: light diſpels it. Uncertainty produces anxiety and jealousy: full aſſurance, and clear information, relieve the mind from ſuch bitter and diſtracting paſſions. Intemperate zeal is, generally, the conſequence of imperfect knowledge and narrow views. Men, who are actually agreed, were their opinions clearly ſtated to them, are ſometimes, through ignorance of each other, the moſt contentious againſt one another, and the moſt paſſionate in their attempts of mutual perſuaſion. On having recourſe to their common creed, they either find no difference of opinion, or nothing material: nothing, even in its utmoſt magnitude, which ought to occasion any breach of friendſhip, any interruption of intercourſe, nor, in moſt caſes, any obſtacle to Chriſtian communion.

THE publication, and due knowledge of a Creed or Confession, when the difference is very great, has on ſome occasions terminated the moſt violent and unbecoming controversies. As marking definitely the boundaries of kingdoms puts an end to hoſtilities, which the uncertain knowledge, and wanton or unknown tranſgreſſion of them, had begun.

THE very number and variety of Creeds, may contri-

bute to produce enlargement of mind, and candour of judgment. For the same reason that you claim the right of differing from others, and maintaining your independence of judgment, you ought to indulge them. If otherwise, "thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things."

HENCE, however paradoxical it may seem, Creeds and Confessions, not only promote knowledge, but candour, liberality, and Christian communion.

THEY also produce and manifest stability of faith. On some subjects, it may be best to keep the mind disengaged and free: to encourage and promote versatility and invention, in such arts and sciences, as admit and receive daily improvement. But, in the great principles of religion and morals, instability must be dangerous. It is dangerous to the individual to have no certain rule of action; and it is dangerous to society to have nothing decisive which can be prescribed for general regulation, nor for criminal judgment. Whatever, therefore, contributes to give stability to religious faith and to morals, must be useful and important.

REVELATION itself is perfect, and incapable of improvement by human art or wisdom. At the same time, it is in so extensive and various a form, as cannot be easily compassed and retained by the bulk of men. A summary of it fixes and determines its subjects and meaning, so that the mind can, on any occasion, readily remember,

review and contemplate them, and always in the same light. Without a summary, some important truth, or its relation to another, might be forgotten; through that defect, religion and morals might appear in a new, and perhaps unfavourable aspect. A dangerous impression may be made by a partial view on the mind: its faith might thus from time to time be changed. Few are capable of composing a just, clear, and short abridgment for themselves. A public Creed, however short and simple, supplies this defect, and pretends not to be an improvement of revelation, but by the ordinary laws of memory, merely, proposes to aid its recollection. The attention fixed on it, as on a precise object, or on any certain number of them, is thus preserved from wavering. Young people wanting this, might fluctuate in their opinions without end; and from want of due regard to it, we see men under the power of fancy, and of the love of novelty, changing their sect, wandering from place to place, and from one religious society to another, till they have gone over the whole circle of sects and opinions within their reach, and sometimes have been finally shipwrecked in the gulf of infidelity or scepticism.

THE most steady mind is liable to deviation and error. Such a compend as a National Creed or Confession, serves as a pole star to restore it to the knowledge of its right course.

THE mind, especially in a state of weakness, is liable to fancy and to fear errors, which have no real existence. Application to this, as a standard, will correct the fancy, and remove the fear.

OTHER men may unreasonably charge us with error. To this standard we can appeal, and by it we may be soon and satisfactorily tried and vindicated.

A Creed is a monument of the faith of former generations. It increases the veneration of good men for those doctrines, which formed the principles, and furnished the pious enjoyment of their fathers. "One generation shall praise thy truths to another, and declare thy mighty acts."

CREEDS and Confessions of Faith, are the means of judging and determining the qualifications and duties of the clergy. Every class of men seems entitled to chuse the system of religious doctrine, which they would have taught among themselves and their children. It is a mere speculative objection, that they who need to be taught are incapable of judging, or of forming a right choice. We know, in fact, they do judge and choose, and every society which claims it for themselves, cannot reasonably deny it to others.

It is necessary, for the information of candidates for the office of teachers of religion, that the general faith of the society be duly expressed and published. They are warned thereby of the doctrines which they will be expected and engaged to teach. If they cannot approve of them, it would be absurd to think of proposing themselves as candidates. And, on the other hand, if they have no

serious objections, their minds insensibly and habitually accommodate to the public faith.

PREMONITION being duly given, there can be no foundation for complaints of ignorance nor of injustice. The judges of their qualifications are not left to their own caprice, nor to any personal or temporary bias: the public standard is the rule of judgment, equally known and approved by them, by the candidates, and by the public.

INTRANTS into the church declare their adherence to this standard, and from this they are bound never to deviate while they exercise the office of a public teacher. Such an engagement contributes to confirm the most steadfast human mind: for all are prone, less or more, to waver and to innovate.

SUCH a standard suggests the subjects, and regulates the conduct of their public ministrations. They readily accommodate to it their general mode of thinking and of teaching. Their public avowal of it, and habitual respect for it, render them free from the very suspicion of deviation.

If suspicion, however, should arise, their appeal to the public standard of faith will prove and vindicate them. And if they shall be found justly chargeable with error, the same standard will judge, and reasonably condemn them.

AND why should any man hold an office, and especially one of so important a nature, longer than he is willing to

fulfil the duties thereof? Ought a follower of the Ptolemean system of astronomy, to be appointed the professor of a school for teaching that science on the Copernican plan? Or if he should change his opinions after being appointed, ought he still to hold his place, though the danger be ever so manifest that he shall impress his scholars with a philosophy that is absurd? Would it be wise to admit a Mahometan to be Bishop of London? Or a Roman Catholic priest to be the minister of a Presbyterian parish? Or a Socinian to a Calvinistic congregation?

BUT you think it a persecution and cruelty to punish or threaten a man, and especially a public teacher, for his opinions. Whether, I reply, is it better to respect an individual, or a whole people? Whether is the public conscience and faith to be sacrificed, or the mere temporal subsistence and comfort of one man? The argument is the stronger against him that he is a public teacher. He is, on that account, the more dangerous. He may corrupt the streams of truth through many generations, by perverting the faith, not only of his present hearers, but of their posterity. Shall he still live by the altar which he endeavours to overthrow? Shall he be honoured and supported by the very society, whom, and whose children he would rob of their present good order and comfort, and of their future happiness?

NOR is it any more injustice to dismiss, than not to receive, an unqualified teacher, who hath changed his opinions, and publicly avows it. The truth is, the injustice lies on the other side. It is injustice to the people,

either to receive or to continue him, after he avows or shows that it is his purpose to mislead and corrupt. If a physician shall show an intention of poisoning his patient, which is justice? which is humanity? to dismiss or to retain him?

If there shall be suffering, then, in the case, the changeable teacher is himself the cause of it. Had he not changed, he should never have been challenged. It is neither persecution nor cruelty, but especially considering the people and the consequences, it is wisdom and mercy. To him it may be sorrow, but to them it is salutary. Nor if he is so convinced that he is right, ought he to be sorry, but rather to be joyful in his new discovery, in maintaining rectitude and a good conscience, at the expence of subsistence; and the favour of God, as he supposes, at the expence of human favour.

BESIDES, he is only denuded of his office, and of the emoluments attached to it. He enjoys the toleration still which is common to all; and, out of the church, he may, if he chuses, propagate his opinions to any extent, provided they be not inconsistent with the laws and good order of society.

SOME such form as a Creed or Confession, is not peculiar to the church, but is common to every society, civil or religious: It expresses its character, and contains the leading principles of its constitution. Others, as well as its own members, are thereby enabled to form, and to communicate a just idea of its nature and end: and in

case of misrepresentation or aspersions, to those principles, formally and publicly declared, they can readily appeal.

OBJECTIONS to Church Confessions arise, as on other subjects, more generally from the prejudices and peculiar tempers of men, than from reason. Some object from a mere habit of captiousness; some to exercise and shew their ingenuity; some object from pride, as they would do to any thing whatsoever, in which they had no share: a few only, it is probable, seriously object from principle and conscience.

It is generally unfortunate too, that objections are not confined to the particular point on which, according to the principles of those who state them, they ought to bear, but are extended to various other subjects. He, for example, who is really scrupulous about subscribing the 23d chapter of the Westminster Confession—"Of the Civil Magistrate," in order somewhat to veil this, endeavours to discover objectionable matter in some of the other chapters; or turns his resentment of one offensive article against the whole Confession. Hence many objections have been unnecessarily stated, and variously repeated, which it seems proper now to obviate.

FIRST, It hath been objected, that Creeds or Confessions seem to supersede the scriptures. We have already shewn, however, that the scriptures use and authorize them. Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son

"of the living God," is a summary of the gospel, required by Jesus himself, in opposition to the floating opinions among the Jews, that "he was John the Baptist, "Elias, or some one of the prophets," and could have no bad effect surely on the scriptures.

It may be further noticed, that upon this very declaration of Peter, in opposition to these various unfounded opinions, Jesus builds his church. That is, he makes this the exclusive doctrine on which she shall rest and be established, secure amidst all the vicissitudes of human opinions and of human affairs; amidst all the storms of human contest and passion; and against all the malice and power of hell. "On this rock I will build my church, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

THE apostle enjoins us "to be ready always, to give "an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the "hope that is in us, with meekness and fear." If it be a single point of doctrine on which we are questioned, some passage of scripture may suffice for the answer, as on the Messiahship and Divinity of Christ, these very words of Peter should be a very suitable answer. But, if there are many things questioned, and the very meaning of some of the passages of scripture is doubted, then is it not necessary that other words be employed, and that the articles of the answer correspond to the length and number of the questions proposed, or agitated? Which suggests,

A second objection to Confessions of Faith, That they are too particular and long. This, it must be acknow-

ledged, is to be regretted. But how can it be avoided? If the question is, not only, "Whom do men say that I "the Son of man am?" but, "What think ye of Christ? "Whose Son is he?"—Whither did he go?—Wherefore did he die?—Is he risen again?—Why? "What shall I "do to be saved?" "Wretched man that I am, who "shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" And if controversies shall have arisen out of these, or any of the other doctrines of the gospel, doth it not become necessary to answer each of them explicitly, and to adapt the answers to the points which have been controverted?

We may expect accordingly, and we do find, that Confessions of Faith became necessarily longer, with the progress of time, in the history of the church. The Arian, the Socinian, and Popish controversies, have particularly loaded the Confessions of the Protestant churches. The disputes with others, since the Reformation, have been added to these. Hence both the Articles of the Church of England, and the Westminster Confession of the Church of Scotland, have become very particular and long. "The enlargements of Creeds," says Bishop Burnet, *Introd.* to 39th Art. "were at first occasioned by the prevarications of heretics, who having put senses favouring their opinions, on the simpler terms in which the first creeds were proposed, it was thought necessary to use more express words."—"To stop the calumnies of the Roman Catholics, the Protestants in Germany prepared that Confession of their Faith which they offered to the Diet at Augsburg, and which carries its name. And after their example, all the other churches which separated from the Roman communion, published the Confessions

of their Faith, both to declare their doctrine for the instruction of their own members, and for covering them from the slanders of their adversaries."

CONFESSIONS have been framed, generally, in times of political, as well as of ecclesiastical and religious controversy, when the minds of men were heated and agitated. This was the case, particularly, with the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland. "Every body knows," says Mr. Dunlop in his Preface to it, "in what unhappy, distracted times the Westminster Assembly met, and composed that Confession of Faith, which hath since been received and owned by the Church of Scotland, as containing the pure and uncorrupted doctrines of Christianity: The flames of a civil war raged at that time through the whole nation, and there were few breasts which had not been heated and disordered thereby."—"In this preternatural heat, there arose a great number of different sects and parties. Giddy, designing, or ambitious persons, would fix upon nothing, but set up for authors of new schemes, run down the old principles of religion, and dreamed fancies of their own, which they then freely propagated, and found too many weak and unsettled enough, to follow such blind and perverse leaders, as Quakers, Antinomians, Fifth Monarchy-men, Muggletonians, &c. whose names were as harsh and barbarous, as their doctrines were destructive of all government, and contradictory to the plainest rudiments of real religion." P. 11, 12.

WHEN once any article is introduced into a constitution, it is difficult to remove it. Though it add nothing

to the strength, but much to the deformity of the structure, yet any attempt to displace it, may relax and deface the whole edifice. A temporary law may be easily repealed, or will cease with the occasion of it, but that which is interwoven with the constitution, any statute confirmed by consuetude, it is more safe generally to retain than to amputate.

A third objection is, That Confessions are an invasion of human rights, and a restriction of free inquiry. Of whose rights? Not of those who have not entered the society; for they remain without that they may retain their freedom. Not of any man who has voluntarily entered into the society; for he might have remained, if he had not preferred the privileges within, to those without the society; and any man in it who is dissatisfied may retire, if he covets it, to enjoy more freedom.

CONFESSIONS lay no unreasonable restraint on free inquiry. Laymen may think, and act, and write, and publish what they please, if consistent with good order, without a challenge. The clergy, too, may inquire and publish what they will, not inconsistent with ecclesiastical law; and wide surely is the field of literature and of religion, in which that law will present no obstacle.

It does not appear from fact, that Confessions have ever operated as obstructions to free inquiry; for where have there been more free inquiry, more important discoveries, and more improvement in all the branches of literature, than in Britain? and, to their honour, a considerable share of these belong to the clergy. Discoveries

in religion are not probable. Some restraint to prevent the clergy only from attempting these, must be at least harmless.

A fourth objection to Confessions is, That it is unjust to oblige men, who do not believe the national religion, to pay in support of a national Creed. The first question here ought to be, Is religion for the good of society? This the greater part, even of irreligious men, acknowledge: They respect religion in others, on account of its utility to good morals, though they will not submit to it themselves. And it has been shewn in Section IV. that religion is natural to man, and necessary to society. But if it is an advantage to society, and atheists, infidels, and unbelievers in general, partake of the general advantages arising from it, then it is not injustice, but justice, that they contribute to the maintenance of what is profitable to them.

WERE the objection valid against religion, it might be opposed, with equal success, against civil government. There are times when men are dissatisfied, not merely with ministers and government, but with the general constitution. It is injustice, such men might say, to levy taxes from us who dissent from the government. But the answer is obvious, that every one deriving the benefit of protection and order, ought to be subject, and to bear his share in maintaining them.

IT seems a frivolous objection, that they are liable to be abused; for every thing is so. This should only ren-

der us the more cautious, as far as we can, to guard against the abuse of any thing.

It may be said, that they tempt men to hypocrisy, to a mere public profession of religion without sincerity. So far as it disposes men to public decency and order, it does well: if some men are deceitful and false, that is their crime, and not the fault of religion. What better is civil government? Every man is not heartily obedient who conforms to law.

CREEDS and Confessions have been employed as means of persecution; that is, men have been persecuted who would not submit to them. This, however, proceeded more from the spirit of the times, and from particular, bigotted, and fiery tempers, than from the nature of Creeds, which have nothing in them to provoke resentment. They characterize the church and nation by whom they are published. They exclude such as do not adopt them from the privileges of that church and nation, and there they stop. Any thing further, such as force to oblige men to adopt them, would be persecution, and was formerly employed, but now happily is disused and reprobated.

At the same time, Confessions ought not to be considered as mere articles of union and peace; that is, mere passive notices of our opinion, in order to occasional communion, and intended to have no decisive nor exclusive effect, and especially on the clergy. They are certainly intended to exclude unbelievers from the pastoral office, to operate by the conscience as well as by pu-

blic law, and actively to do all that can be reasonably done, to preserve and maintain religion among us, pure and undefiled.

ON the whole, no reasonable, unprejudiced person, will deny the advantages resulting from Confessions of Faith, nor the importance of their being subscribed by the clergy. They are recommended to the laity, but the laity are not required to subscribe them, nor any way bound to adhere to them, unless they are to hold some office of trust or profit in church or state. And we may generally observe, that they who most venerate the scriptures, are not generally the least respectful to Confessions of Faith.



SECTION VIII.

The Advantages of Religious Establishments.

It is by no means intended to hold up Establishments as a perfect system, without defect, or incapable of abuse; for this is inadmissible in any thing human; but the object of this Essay, and particularly of this Section, is to shew, that they are attended with many and great advantages which society could not enjoy without them; or rather that, arising out of the nature of man, as hath been already shewn, they are necessary to the good order and existence of society.

If it be admitted, as was illustrated, Sect. IV. that religion is necessary to good morals, and that good morals are essential to government and good order, then it must be also admitted, that that system is the best, which most effectually secures the general extension, and steady maintenance of religion over the whole kingdom. Were there no obstacles nor prejudices to prevent such an extension and maintenance, and were men to act always in such a case promptly and reasonably, then no systematic and obligatory means should be necessary. Congregations and parishes should be formed readily, according to the progress of population, in every quarter of a country. Ministers should be chosen with deliberation, impartiality, and wisdom, and a suitable and secure maintenance be duly provided for them. But as we know, that there are obstacles and prejudices, and that men, even when they

know their duty and interest, are far from being always wise or prompt to observe and promote them, some general plan, established by law, becomes requisite to regulate and enforce them.

THE poverty, real or pretended, of some districts, might be pled as an excuse for neither building a church, nor maintaining a minister.

IN some cases, the avarice of the most wealthy might operate against the general inclination, either altogether to prevent the erection of a congregation, or so as to make the burden fall heaviest on those least able to bear it.

THE unconcern of wealthy men about religion, the prejudices of the irreligious, the unbelief and antipathy of the infidel, should produce similar effects. They would employ their influence to discourage, to ridicule, to oppose, rather than to promote religion.

SUPPOSE even a general willingness to institute and maintain the ordinances of the gospel, but a considerable diversity of opinion, as to either doctrines or forms of worship; either the purpose must be abandoned, unseemly and hazardous contention must ensue, or there must be some over-ruling power to accommodate and unite them.

WHEN suitable means, towards a good end, are already provided, men are less disposed to question trivial circumstances attending them. But when every man finds room and encouragement to state his difference of opinion, altercation and division are endless. In public meetings,

for example, when, after some deliberation on a subject, a minute, comprehending the general opinion of those present, is written with dispatch, the whole fall into it with ease and satisfaction; but if there shall be much delay, to allow time for stating doubts about trivial matters, about words and phrases, it will become almost impossible to satisfy and reunite them: So when the law provides the means of religion, as most generally agreeable to the country, all readily embrace and observe them. But when left every man to deliberate on, and to chuse his own system, there is no end of hesitation and contention.

THE wealthy and designing have it too much in their power, without legal regulation, to mislead the religious affections, and to abuse the confidence of the people. If they shall erect places of worship at their own expence, they may present to them, and maintain in them, a teacher of whatever opinions they shall prefer. Meantime the people have no choice. Their religious nature disposes them to attend somewhere on religious ordinances, they are unqualified to judge for themselves, or they are unsuspicious, and so their minds and manners are corrupted.

AGAIN, whether an individual, or the majority of the people, may have the right of election and presentation, they are liable to change their opinions, their creed and denomination, with every vacancy or general bias. There is nothing to prevent them from having successively a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, an Anabaptist, a Quaker, &c. No man of common sense will deny, that this must

be unfavourable to the human mind, to society, to present comfort, and to future happiness.

'To all these evils an Establishment provides some reasonable and becoming check. The laws secure instruction, and the means of public religious worship, equally for all ranks, and for every district of the kingdom. It equalizes the burden to the willing and unwilling, so that the avaricious are not exempted, and the generous are not oppressed. The indifferent, the irreligious, the infidel, and the atheist, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, must contribute their share to the maintenance of religion. The very levying of the annual stipend from them, is a call of Providence to consider their ways and to be wise, to regard the ordinances which they must contribute to maintain, and to reap from them the benefit which they are designed to convey. No means may succeed effectually to prevent difference of opinion, and separation in worship. But the means which a Religious Establishment provides, are likely, as far as human means can prevail, to meet the general disposition, to accommodate meek and gentle tempers, whose differences are not material, and to unite the general body of a parish or congregation in religious society. The institution, however, may be good, and the administration of it may be imprudent and unsuccessful. No institution; for example, seems better calculated, than the combination of the civil and ecclesiastical law of Scotland, for supplying vacant churches with pastors, were the patrons generally more wise, more conscientious, and more respectful to the people; and were the church more cautious in the licensing of probationers, and sometimes more circumspect and strict

in weighing the characters of presentees, and the consequences of admitting the unworthy and unqualified to parishes. The patron is a legal check on the people and clergy; and the clergy are a check on the patron and people. Their power and influence are admirably balanced in the constitution; but nothing in the hands of men is free from imperfection. And they who have seceded from the church on account of the abuse of this very institution of patronage, might, from their own experience of the difficulties attending their popular settlements, on several occasions, say of their mother church, "Let him that is without sin in this respect among ourselves, cast the first stone at her."

UNDER a Religious Establishment, such as that of Britain, the wealthy and designing, the capricious and unstable, whether as patrons or people, have it not in their power to change their creed with every fickle humour, or season of innovation. The law prescribes to the patron, to the church, and to the people, the character, qualifications, and creed, of such as are to become the public teachers of religion; and the law has no prejudices nor partiality, is liable to no peevishness nor wavering, but uniformly and firmly dictates and ordains what appears on the whole to be for the general good.

AND let no man, nor class of men, presume proudly on the wisdom and excellence of their own conduct, plans, nor administration of them. The wisest men, and the best ordered minds, need occasional superintendence, restraint, and government. The most pious and prudent minister needs, and will be thankful for the counsel and oversight

of his presbytery or bishop, and these again of their superiors: such as look still farther around them, will observe the advantage which sometimes arises to the church from the superintendence of the state, or to the state from the influence and authority of the church. It is not good for a man, nor for a congregation, nor for a church, nor for a state, to be alone: God hath created them for association and union; and what God hath joined, let not man put asunder.

EXCEPT during the age of miraculous administration, it hath pleased God to make men themselves, generally, the agents of promoting, of retaining, or of losing their religious privileges and blessings. Among other means, purity of character, decency of conduct, piety of affection, dignity of sentiment, study, literature, and general respectability, in the clergy, are made the instruments of maintaining and promoting religion among the people. If, however, through want of such attention and encouragement as an Establishment is most likely to give, piety and purity, literature, and respectability should fail, religion must decay; the knowledge of her origin, and of the truth of her doctrines, must be obscured; mysticism and error, infidelity and atheism, or superstition and barbarism, must again prevail. It cannot be denied, that both weak and wicked men have appeared in the established church. Every such case is most seriously to be deplored, as truly disgraceful. And it is fortunate when their names can be speedily expunged from the ecclesiastical records. In every extensive body, however, proportioned to the number of its members, errors and vicious characters may be expected. We find it so in

numerous sects as well as established churches; and it must be so in independent congregations, supposing them to exist in the same number, and over the same extent of country. But of all these, an Established Church, all circumstances considered, is most likely to maintain clerical respectability and usefulness, by the superior power with which she is invested over her clergy.

FIRST, By her regard to their early habits. Every profession almost is characterized by a peculiar habit and manner. The sailor, who is seldom exposed to the selfishness and imposition of the world, is frank and generous. The soldier is little accustomed to local attachment. Literary men, who mingle but little in the world, become sometimes unaccommodating or awkward in society. The habits of piety and morality are universally expected and revered in a minister of the gospel. They ought to appear natural and graceful; and in order to this, they ought to be of early and regular growth. Then shall there be, comparatively, not only nothing to offend, to disgust, or to shock, nothing in their example to counteract the spirit of their ministrations; but on the contrary, they shall adorn the doctrine of Christ their Saviour in all things, and dispose men, by their good works, to glorify their Father who is in heaven.

For this purpose, and with this view, our Establishment holds out a suitable encouragement to young men, to devote themselves early to the service of the church, to accommodate their habits to that divine and holy service, and to cultivate their talents by due study and learning; and it provides them with the stated means of regu-

lar academical study and improvement. The means and the end appear the best which human wisdom can devise.

SECONDLY, An Established Church is most likely to maintain the respectability and usefulness of the clergy, by her regard to their literature.

THERE are advantages to be derived from every step in the progress of literature. In the very learning of languages, the faculties acquire strength, and natural ease of application. The mind insensibly obtains ideas, and an improved taste. It becomes acquainted with its own power, with human nature, and with the works and ways of God.

IT not only acquires knowledge, but by academical exercises, and other ordinary means of discipline and improvement, of a private as well as public nature, it acquires the habit of suitable expression and communication, or an aptness to teach.

SUCH an early previous discipline in literature, appears absolutely requisite to the respectability, the extensive and permanent maintenance of religion. It is wonderful that men, not destitute of understanding on other subjects, should be so unreasonable on this; should allow, that youth and long training are requisite to the knowledge and practice of every other profession in life, and yet presume, that *a few months* study and preparation, are sufficient to qualify men for preaching the gospel. Men of peculiar genius and eloquence, may occasionally arise, who, without much culture, may equal, or even excel,

in knowledge, in judgment, and aptness to teach, some of those who have spent many years of labour and anxiety in study: but there are comparatively few, and they cannot be depended on. Meteors may be more brilliant, and may shed a greater temporary lustre than the stars; but they cannot surely be preferred to them: nor could they even exist, were the beautiful and steady lights of nature extinguished.

THE mere teaching of Christian doctrines, is not all the duty of the ministers of the gospel. Its doctrines are themselves simple and few, and might be soon known, and easily communicated. But they have a relation to the whole subjects of literature. In order to render them successful, therefore, these relations all ought to be studied and familiarly known: the nature of man, to whom they are addressed, with all his relations, duties, and interests; the nature and interests of society; the works, the character, the government of God: These, and the history of them, and their connection with one another, are not obvious, nor to be acquired, but by long and attentive study.

THE success of religion seems destined by Providence to have a necessary dependence on literature. Jesus Christ was sent into the world, at a period when its rays were most abundantly diffused over the world; when there was least danger of delusion and imposition; when men were most capable of tracing and applying prophecy, of distinguishing miracles, and of discerning the comparative excellence and simplicity of the Christian doctrine. As learning failed and disappeared, Christianity gradually

yielded to the darkness and oppression of superstition; nor did it rise again and shine, but with the revival and prevalence of literature.

THE Christian religion is founded on facts. These facts extend far into antiquity, and the evidence with which they were accompanied, as well as the scenes in which they were exhibited, lay in distant regions. The knowledge of ancient history, therefore, is necessary to the thorough knowledge of the gospel. The frequent allusion to ancient opinions, whether the sacred writers approve or oppose them, renders a familiar acquaintance with the authors and followers of these opinions, necessary and agreeable. We are liable too to suppose every new opinion and controversy, which arises in modern times out of the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, strange and unprecedented, without a particular knowledge of the history of the Christian church. In a word, the medium through which the rays of truth have passed, is so obscure and extensive, as to endanger or mar its beauty and efficacy, without an intimate acquaintance with the dead, as well as living languages, with the laws of the material world, with the Providence of God, with the policy of nations, with the principles and various aspects of human nature. Such studies require an early commencement, and an ardent and steady perseverance through life.

HENCE the necessity of separating a class of men, who may early and wholly devote their attention to them. Prosecuting each his favourite study, with a theological view, some will excel in languages and scripture criticism;

some in antiquities and general erudition; some in philosophy, history, or rhetoric. Materials shall thus be constantly prepared, be laid up in store, or be suitably applied for the defence, the illustration, or communication of religion. The whole subject is duly investigated, and a foundation is laid for universal faith and confidence. The bulk of mankind, who have neither leisure, inclination, nor, perhaps, talents, for such extensive and difficult researches, may undervalue them, and remain insensible of the value and importance of both the means and the end; but the better informed, and thinking part of men, ought not to disregard and despise them.

AN Established Church is calculated to produce these effects. It encourages young men to devote themselves early and wholly to the study of literature, with a view to the service of the gospel; and it in due time rewards them with that competency, which, on their becoming ministers, relieves their minds from anxiety, and enables them to prosecute with ardour their professional and literary duties.

THE order of men set apart for teaching the gospel, ought to be numerous, proportioned to the population, not merely for the purposes of public ministrations, and of private study, but for watching over the religious and moral principles, and conduct of the people. Public teaching becomes the more effectual, when it is occasionally and prudently accompanied with private intercourse and admonition.

A faithful pastor is as the father of the people, and

they are generally disposed to yield to him a due filial respect and submission. He is their censor, whose reproofs they fear; their friend, whom they love; and their counsellor, in whom they confide. They tell him freely their wants; they advise with him in their difficulties; they look for consolation from him in their distresses; and they communicate to him their prosperity and joys: they repose their souls on his doctrines; and regulate, by his evangelical maxims, their temper and their lives. If his charge, however, shall rise beyond a certain number, he cannot easily recognize them, nor they him, and of course they become mutually strange and indifferent. To prevent this, more churches should be erected readily, according to the progress of population.

So great a number of public teachers, as a large community or nation requires, might, in the present diversified and fickle state of human nature, produce an endless and jarring diversity of rites and opinions. The incorporation of the church prevents this, and secures uniformity among all her members. The rules of such an incorporation are framed by the clergy, and sanctioned by the state, so that both pledge, and either may claim their faithful observance.

SUCH is the principle of the charter incorporating the Church of Scotland, (Act of Parl. ann. 1690) by which the being held engaged to be faithful to the state, the state is bound to maintain and defend all her rights and privileges; and particularly, “that her ministers and
“elders shall have liberty to meet in their several courts,
“supreme and subordinate, for the purpose of regulating

“ matters of doctrine, worship, discipline and government
“ in the church.”

SUCH a corporation might be useful, independent and destitute of any civil sanction; but the jarring of interests, and the violence of passion and party, should, in that case, too easily dissolve it. Every one, acquainted with human nature, knows the importance and necessity of due restraint to overawe the passions of men, to repress their occasional humours, to prevent them from either capriciously wandering into error and folly, or from overleaping the bounds of reasonable and scriptural decency and order.

SINGLE unaffiliated congregations seem the least qualified to promote and maintain religion. Who shall moderate in their differences, or judge or controul them? How shall their pastor be provided and qualified? How shall he be invested with clerical privileges and orders? How shall literature be cultivated in connection with religion? These questions cannot be answered satisfactorily, but by those few, who, contented with lay preachers, do not reckon literature and solemn ordination necessary to the decent and orderly ministration of the gospel. The greater part of them, generally, have grown faithful and respectable, directly or indirectly, however insensible of it, by the teaching, and under the ordinances of the Established Church; have taken offence, however, at evils which in any numerous body are unavoidable; and find a purity and quiet in a small and infant society, which in a greater and older are not so easily attainable.

EVEN classes of congregations, as among the dissenters in England, and the Presbyterians in America, unincorporated, want that weight and authority which are necessary to the government of society, proportioned to its magnitude; want the power requisite, either to move them, or duly to restrain and regulate their motions; to prevent the jerks and instability of human levity, and to impress and maintain uniformity and order on religious society. The mere spiritual discipline of the church may be slighted by light and ungodly minds, even among the clergy: the power of following it up with civil penalties, in their case, seems necessary to the general welfare.

SUCH an Establishment of the Church, will not only secure internal order and stability, but will more effectually defend itself against any external injury or encroachment. It may be envied, but it will also be respected by other sects and churches. They may loudly testify against its errors; but, on serious deliberation, they will secretly reverence its constitution. The state itself might trample on one or a few distinct congregations, but it venerates the Establishment which itself hath sanctioned.

THE interference of the civil magistrate, may be occasionally necessary in the church, in things where external order is concerned. It is a matter of extreme delicacy, and hath always been watched by the Church of Scotland with a becoming jealousy. But neither ought the church to intermeddle with civil affairs: her duty is, in her own sphere, and among her own members, to inspire and maintain the principles and the du-

ties of due subordination and order, and, on no pretence whatever, to invade the province of civil government: her duty is, to “render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and to God the things which are God’s.”

SECTION IX.

Of the Interest of Dissenters in the Established Church.

ALL true Christians have a common interest in one another. They are all partakers of the same gospel, members of Christ’s body, and heirs of his eternal kingdom. In whatever quarter of the earth they reside, or by whatever name they are called, they have one God and Father, one Mediator, one Spirit, one faith: “They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” Every one of them, having the Spirit of Christ, bears his fruits, and by his fruits are known. One of the chief of these fruits is love. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Hence, as one body, they ought to sympathize and to forbear with one another; to honour and to forgive one another; to co-

operate in advancing their Lord and Saviour's service, and with a becoming zeal to promote their common interest in his church.

YET human infirmity and depravity, showing themselves in the temper, and in every work of man, mar the unity and beauty, and interrupt the general sympathy of Christians. The pride of opinion, and the intemperate zeal of system, have disturbed their harmony, and produced much schism, separation, and intolerance. A good man, who was not free from this very temper, and who suffered by it, complains thus of it: "By means of imposition, and the driving of uniformity, the disciples of Christ have been so far engaged in sects and parties, and have been trained up in such a regard, every one to the way of his own sect, that any attempt to bring them into communion in love, upon those things wherein they all are one, and all divided from the men of this world, however strictly joined with them in their sects, must meet with great opposition from them. And much of this is owing to their teachers by whom they have received the gospel, who press upon them the peculiarities of their own sect, which have nothing to support them, for most part, but human authority, and that with such zeal, as if religion were to stand or fall with them." (Glas's Works, vol. I. p. 220.)

WHEN two bodies are closely united, sometimes the one, and at other times the other, will assume more than its ordinary and due influence. The church and the state alternately impinge on each other's freedom; and in either case jealousies and discontents arise. From the

year 1638 to the Restoration, the Church of Scotland had been accustomed to dictate: she was the less able to bear the severity with which she was afterwards treated; and some of her members carried their jealousy so far, as never, even after the Revolution, to coalesce with the ecclesiastical body in alliance with the civil government.

THE Reformed Presbytery, amounting at present to about 4,000 persons, trace their origin in this manner, through these times, as far back as the Reformation, and consider themselves as the only pure Presbyterians since the Revolution. They profess to adhere to the solemn league and covenant, agreed to by the nation before the Restoration, in which they abjure Popery and Prelacy, and resolve to maintain and defend the doctrines, worship, discipline, and government of the church, as approved by the Parliament, and Assembly at Westminster, and by the General Assembly of the Church, and Parliament of Scotland, 1645-9.

ON these principles they object, not to a Religious Establishment, but to the Religious Establishment as it exists; they object, not to an alliance of the church with the state, but to the alliance of the church with an uncovenanted king and government.

THE Burgher and Antiburgher seceders amount, according to the account with which I have been kindly favoured by some of their ministers, each to about 55,000 persons. They reckon the average of their congregations at 500.

ONE of these gentlemen, on sending me his opinion of the Antiburghers, writes, " The number of examinable persons in our connection may be moderately estimated at 50,000, besides vacant congregations. I am persuaded the Burghers are equally numerous, or nearly so. Our congregations on the north of Tay, are three or four times the number of theirs; but theirs are more numerous in Fife, the Lothians, in the west, and, I believe, in the south of Scotland. The Burghers, of their own accord, expressed the same opinion respecting the number and situation of the Antiburghers.

THEY seceded together from the church in the years 1732-4. In their Act and Testimony, drawn and published on that occasion, they enumerate several defections and grievances in the church from which they were separated, and, like the Reformed Presbytery, resort to the Establishment of Religion, during the period from 1638 to 1650, as the purest times of Presbyterianism, and as the ground on which they have erected their church. But the chief and immediate cause of their secession, was the act of the General Assembly 1732, relative to the settlement of ministers.

THE Parliament 1690 had abolished patronages, and vested the right of electing ministers to vacant country parishes in the heritors and elders; and in burghs, in the magistrates, town council, and elders. Towards the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, in the year 1711, the Parliament, alleging inconveniencies and abuses attending the said abolition, restored the right of patrons. This excited much discontent in the church. Forty-two of the

more zealous ministers, in the year 1732, and some hundreds of elders, represented to the General Assembly this grievance, requesting redress of that and other defections. The Assembly refused to hear them; and enacted, That in cases where the law of patronage did not preclude election, the choice of a minister should be competent to a conjunct meeting only of heritors and elders, being Protestants.

AGAINST this act Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of Stirling, and moderator of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, inveighed with much freedom. A complaint being lodged against him on that account, the Synod judged him censurable. On his appeal, the General Assembly affirmed the sentence of the Synod, and rebuked and admonished him. He protested, and to his protest several ministers adhered. Higher censures being afterwards inflicted, he and seven other ministers finally seceded, and erected themselves into the Associated Presbytery.

HAVING in a few years become pretty numerous, they quarrelled in the year 1747, about the Burghers' Oath. That oath begins thus, "I profess, and allow with my heart, the true religion, presently professed within this realm, and authorized by the laws thereof. I will abide at, and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Romish Religion, called Papistry." The Messrs. Erskines and Mr. Fisher found no objections to this clause, and they and their adherents remained Burghers. But Mr. Adam Gib, late of Edinburgh, and others, were of opinion, that by swearing that clause, they virtually renounced their testimony as seceders, and were therefore

called Antiburghers. The former enjoy all the rights, privileges, and offices of other citizens. The latter, from this scruple, have relinquished these advantages. On this difference they separated as far from one another, as they had done from the church. They have no communion with one another, with the church, nor with other dissenters. But the Burghers occasionally hear other ministers, and are less scrupulous than the Antiburghers, about worshipping with Christians of any denomination.

THEIR difference with the Establishment ought, now that personal animosities have died with their authors, to occasion no strong antipathy. Sprung from the church, though separated from her by circumstantial differences of opinion, they ought to feel an interest in her, like that of children to their parents. It often happens, that parents and children have little intercourse, on account of their difference of age, pursuits, situation, or opinions; but whatever may interrupt or disturb their communication and enjoyment, there is a relation betwixt them, which it would be unnatural to neglect or to violate.

FROM the church the seceders received the very privileges of which they boast: their knowledge, their piety, their high sense of purity and decency. They separated from her when she was in maturity and vigour, neither raw and undisciplined, nor in the decline of age. Had they not learned the doctrines of the gospel, and imbibed the sentiments of liberty in the church, they were not likely, either to have felt the inclination, or to have

formed the resolution of detaching themselves from her authority and government. Their interest and gratitude ought to be increased by these considerations.

THEIR subsequent conduct, compared with that of other dissenters, proves, that their secession was owing to the pride of privilege, to the desire of carrying the ecclesiastical liberty which they enjoyed, to an extreme, and, excepting the article of patronage, not to any abhorrence of constitutional principle. When the Reformers separated from the Romish church, they protested against her constitution as well as administration, and generally assumed both new principles and a new form. When the Puritans dissented from the Church of England, they rejected not only her hierarchy, but generally her habits and liturgy. But the seceders of Scotland retained the standards, forms of worship, mode of discipline and of government, and in every feature the resemblance of the mother church. Instead of pretending to abjure any of these, they rather profess to adhere to them more rigidly, and to administer them more purely. They do not object to an alliance betwixt church and state, but to particular infringements of liberty in the settlement of ministers, and to the conduct of the ruling party in the church who excluded them. Mr. Erskine and others protested, "That they were laid under the disagreeable necessity of seceding, not from the principles and constitution of the Church of Scotland, to which they declared they steadfastly adhered, but from those ecclesiastical courts only, which had ejected them from ministerial communion."

To these principles they still adhere; and a late at-

tempt to innovate in one article of their constitution, has produced no small agitation in one of these religious bodies.

SUCH a resemblance of constitution, of plan, of procedure, in order to the same great end, ought, surely, to create and maintain a mutual respect and interest. "Let there be no strife betwixt us, for we be brethren." We differ, it is true, but it is only in the circumstances of some means towards our common end. While the difference cannot be accommodated, there ought to be mutual forbearance. Far be it from either of us to injure the other; from the greater to despise the less; and from the lesser to wish or conspire the dissolution and ruin of the greater. One of these bodies, indeed, has spoken out a language the most conciliatory and interesting. The late respectable Mr. Pattison of Edinburgh had done it before, (Preface to M'Ewen's Essays.) In the republication of the Act and Testimony of the Burghers, they have declared, "that were the grounds of their secession happily removed, they would account it one of the most singular felicities of their time, to return with pleasure to the communion of the Established Church of Scotland."

THE Relief Synod, by a statement with which I am favoured by one of the ministers thereof, consists of sixty congregations, the average of which he reckons 600; in all 36,000 persons. They were separated from the church in the year 1752, on Mr. Gillespie refusing to assist at the settlement of the parish of Innerkeithing, and on Mr. Boston's not obtaining the presentation to the church of Jedburgh, which the people of that town had

solicited for him. When they found themselves excluded from the communion of the church, and could not adopt the tenets of the secession, they resolved themselves into a Presbytery, willing to afford relief to all "who adhered to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, as exhibited in her creeds, canons, confessions, and forms of worship," but who disapproved of the law of patronage, as presently exercised in the church. They are unwilling to be reckoned seceders. Their licentiates are educated under the Established Church Professors, whose certificates they acknowledge. Many of their people receive the Lord's Supper with equal readiness in the Established Church as in their own.

Thus, least of all alienated from their parent church, they can have no interest in her fall. Their interest lies, not in subverting the church, but in accommodating the people whom the law of patronage may occasionally offend. At present they enjoy all the liberty which they can reasonably wish. A new system of government in church and state, might gratify them with more friendly professions, but with far less actual toleration.

A gentleman of observation and accuracy, has favoured me with the following statement of these four bodies of the Presbyterian dissenters in Scotland, extracted from the Statistical Accounts lately published by Sir John Sinclair. As these accounts contain reports on this subject from no more than 505 parishes, it follows, that a great many are not included. A conjecture, however, has been hazarded concerning the most populous districts, where separation is known to be deeply rooted. This

conjecture comprehends 24,700 of the sum total, and four-fifths of this number have been attached to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, St. Ninians, and Dunblane, no distinct reports having been transmitted from these places.

	Parishes.	Reports.	No. of People.	
Synod of Lothian, consist. of	105	from which	66	15,027
— of Merse,	66	27		7,672
— of Dumfries,	53	36		2,033
— of Galloway,	37	21		754
— of Glasgow and Ayr,	115	71		28,643
— of Perth and Stirling,	78	58		15,413
— of Fife,	66	48		21,956
— of Angus and Mearns,	76	53		7,556
— of Aberdeen,	99	54		2,153
— of Moray,	51	29		1,109
— of Ross,	46	24		1,107
— of Argyle,	39	14		2,006
— of Glenelg,	29	19		0
— of Orkney,	17	2		0
— of Zetland,	12	3		0
	<hr/> 889	<hr/> 525		<hr/> 105,429

THEIR own account, as formerly stated, is much greater.

The Reformed Presbytery,	4,000
Antiburgher Synod,	55,000
Burgher's do.	55,000
Relief do.	36,000
	<hr/> 150,000

THE Methodists, Independents, Baptists, and other smaller sects, will not altogether exceed 4,000

THE sum total of the population in Scotland, according to Dr. Webster, in the year

1755, - - - 1,265,380

According to Sir John Sinclair, do. 1795, 1,526,492

CONSIDERING all the dissenters as one body, they form a large proportion of the nation. But there is no probability of their union, for they are generally more averse from one another, than any of them is to the Established Church. They may wish for, what they suppose, amendments, in some of her laws and practice; and such an enlargement of her communion, as may include them, those of them, at least, who would reckon it a privilege or an enjoyment. But they could derive no advantage from her overthrow. None of them can hope to establish their system on her ruins. Were this even probable, the inconveniency and danger are sufficient to deter them from attempting it. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." Were every sect equally zealous to be substituted in the room of the church, it is impossible to say which should succeed. If none of these, but some other shall succeed, what better are they? what more can they enjoy than toleration? But this they already enjoy, and in as great perfection as it can be enjoyed under any constitution. They can gain nothing then: but they may lose much. They may lose their privilege of toleration, under a timid, a rigid, or an arbitrary and absolute government, to which anarchy may give rise. Is not this as possible here as in France? They

may lose their existence as religious societies in the general convulsion. They may lose the prosperity, and even existence of pure and undefiled religion, in its invasion and oppression, as in France, by irreligion and infidelity. It is, by far, their interest, therefore, that the Established Church be preserved and maintained, imperfect as she may be, rather than that any change should take place, farther removed from their professed principles, and more unfavourable to their success and enjoyment.

I am far from supposing, that, as a body, any of them ever thought of conspiring the overthrow of the church; but it seems neither uncharitable nor uncandid, to think, that a few of them, as individuals, may have had more and stronger temptations to undermine and subvert it, than those who belong to the Establishment; or, that they have fewer motives to guard and uphold the church, than her own members. May I hope, therefore, that they will pardon the very supposition of conspiring with the adversaries of the church, and suffer, from a brother who sincerely respects them, the word of caution and exhortation.

You have already given general evidence, and some eminent proofs of your attachment to the state. Your interest, my brethren, appears to me to be closely and inseparably interwoven also with that of the church. Take the occasion of her failings, or of those of her members, as far as you have opportunity, with meekness and candour, to correct them. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

But, in such times as these, beware of unnecessarily exposing your brethren of any denomination. The unseasonable or severe reproach, may be turned by the infidel against your own as well as against our body. "Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." "Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed."

UNDER a universal toleration, of which America is an imperfect example, and but of short duration, there is a want of that kind of motive which operates most powerfully on the human mind, to make suitable provision for the clergy. The influence of example is proverbial. Emulation will stimulate mankind to their duty, when nobler principles fail. The church takes the lead, and makes, generally speaking, a decent and stable provision for her ministers. The dissenters follow hard after: they would be ashamed to be much inferior to the church in this respect: but were there no such example, shame, pride, emulation, could not have the same influence. The church may be considered as the standard, by which their measures of provision are regulated: remove or destroy it, and there will arise innumerable and successful temptations to diminish them. Poverty, avarice, religious indifference, all combine to create and plead delays, till the half-starved minister is glad to compound with them, and to accept of a part for the whole. A repetition of partial payment settles into consuetude.

DISSENTERS have an interest in the literature of the church: She offers the greatest encouragement to learn-

ing, and ought to furnish the chief examples of it. The dissenters are diligent, and becoming successful rivals. Meantime, they reap the general advantages of the knowledge which the church diffuses; and it is their interest not to extinguish nor obscure that light, which they happily reflect and enjoy.

THE dissenters have an interest in the church, in respect even of morals. If her moral principles are relaxed, their study and interest is, not only to bear testimony against her on that account, but to exhibit their superior principles and discipline by their more pure and holy practice. If she becomes more zealous in the faith, and more visibly and universally holy in the service of the gospel, they ought to move with proportional zeal and diligence, in order to equal, or to surpass her.

THE dissenters, I repeat it, can have no interest in subverting the church, unless the probability were greater than it is, that all, or any of them, should be erected and established on her ruins. But the same innovating system and power of atheism, infidelity, irreligion, and anarchy, combined against her, would next attack them; for their principles, form, and end, are similar. Be assured, it is not the mere principle of alliance between church and state, against which such forces are concentrated, but against religion and government. What then could dissenters gain, who profess themselves the most rigid friends of both? If the main body shall be defeated, the smaller and scattered parties must be routed and destroyed.

On the whole, then, the importance of Religious Esta-

blishments, is a subject which ought to interest all good men, and all religious societies. It is an occasion of contest, not betwixt the church and dissenters, nor betwixt men of any one set of religious opinions and those of another; but betwixt anarchists and the friends of religious and civil order; betwixt infidels and real Christians. If Christians, laying aside or overlooking their inferior differences, shall unite more cordially in measures of common defence and support, they shall, with the Divine blessing, counteract all the designs of their enemies. But if they shall indulge in jealousy, malice, and envy, hateful and hating one another, regardless of their common interest, and of the real prosperity, not of this or that society only, but of the church of Christ, then shall the enemy come in as a flood, and desolate both the palace and the sanctuary. "In all things, then, let all of us
 "approve ourselves as the ministers of God, in much
 "patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. By
 "purity, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness,
 "by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of
 "truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

THE CONCLUSION.

THUS, with a good intention, I have endeavoured to state and illustrate the doctrine of Religious Establishments; to shew that they have prevailed in all nations and ages; that the scriptures offer no precise form of church policy; that it should have been unwise, and in the times of the apostles especially, impracticable; that by the associating principle of love, on which the gospel lays so much stress, by the respect for civil government which it so earnestly enjoins, and by the practice which followed and finally prevailed, Christianity cannot be said to disapprove, but rather, on the whole, to favour and encourage Religious Establishments; that China and America are no proper exceptions from the general doctrine; that Religious Establishments are founded in the nature of man and of society; that religious and irreligious men, however opposite their principles, their character and design, may unite and prevail in a temporary subversion of them; that creeds and confessions, and that provision for the clergy, may vary with times and circumstances; but so deep is the root of Church Establishments in our nature, and such their advantages to society, that no attempt to supersede or to reject them, can long succeed: they shall revive, and be cherished by men of all ranks and denominations, wherever there is wise policy, and the love of order.

ERRORS and abuses will attach to them, and to every thing human. Sometimes just occasions of offence, and

sometimes fastidiousness, pride, or the love of singularity and innovation, shall cause sects to arise, and flourish by her side, and under her shelter: they may feel some temporary resentment, and occasional jealousy and envy, but withal they have an interest in her, and a relation to her, which they ought not to violate.

IN treating this subject, my object throughout has been to avoid every thing unnecessarily offensive, to inquire and instruct with simplicity, and to state the truth with freedom. It will reward me with much pleasure, if what I have written shall be received with general candour, and with some success; if it shall contribute to inform the ignorant on a subject not generally known; to establish the wavering, and to caution the rash and unwary; if it shall contribute to remove prejudices, and to draw men nearer towards one another, whose principles and interests are almost the same.

SHOULD any one say the subject is altogether unreasonable, and the alarm unnecessary: you are awakening a controversy which was asleep, and suggesting doubts and difficulties which should not otherwise have occurred.

I answer, the subject was not asleep: It was the topic of frequent conversation, and the object of various plans: not many who spake of it seemed to understand it, nor to be aware of its consequences, and were in danger of being carried along by the love of novelty, or the craftiness of the artful and designing: that men, professing themselves wise, had started doubts, and were ready to have overthrown the faith of many.

THAT the season is alarming to the church and to religion, no one can deny who has read Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy, &c. or the Abbe Barruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism. These contain abundant evidence, that plans of the most secret and extensive nature, have been devised and executed for many years, the effects of which now appear, for undermining the religious and moral principles of all ranks, and of both sexes; for counteracting and abolishing religious institutions and orders, and particularly the Sabbath and the clergy: in a word, for dissolving all the existing governments, both of church and state; and for annihilating the Christian religion.

IN order to accomplish this end, men favourable to the plan have been introduced, and are attempted to be introduced into the very cabinets of princes, and into every department of state; into those stations of the church which possess the greatest influence; into universities, academies, and schools; into lectureships and places of public entertainment; books and pamphlets, of every description and size, are published and industriously circulated; means of every kind are used in the most insensible and gradual, but successful manner, to bias early the minds of youth, to corrupt the whole mass of society, to crush the system and name of Jesus Christ, and reduce the other nations, as they have actually succeeded in reducing France and Italy, to a state of atheism and anarchy.

IN this awful state of society, when danger is generally invisible, yet is certainly approaching us in every form and direction, who ought not to fear? Who ought not to watch with anxiety, lest he be either oppressed by the

diabolical combination, or be tempted to become a tool for promoting its horrible designs? Ought not every one, in the station which Providence hath assigned him, to discharge his duty with diligence and fidelity; to do his endeavour to warn and confirm others, as well as to secure himself; and, as far as in him lieth, to preserve and maintain the order, the peace, and stability of society?

A wise king will, in such times, be peculiarly cautious of the men whom he admits into his councils; nor will he be regardless of the characters of the religious and political principles of those whom he prefers to the various subordinate offices of the state. It is incumbent on patrons of churches, and of professorships in universities, to consider well the qualifications and character, the principles and connections of those whom they present, and especially to important charges. If they shall present unqualified or ungodly men, men of light minds, or of incorrect manners, they shall furnish just occasion for reproach and offence, against both religion and learning, and an additional argument for the overthrow of the church; or if they present men friendly to Jacobinism, they shall directly and actively contribute to subvert and ruin both religion and government.

It is peculiarly incumbent on the clergy, and all teachers, to guard against every thing which may hurt or offend, that the ministry may not be blamed; that truth, that good religious and moral principles, may be early planted and universally cultivated, may be deeply rooted, and may become abundantly fruitful. As the chief means of religion and of learning, and as the friends of

order and of government, as men who have influence in society, and who have been uniformly diligent in defending the truth, and in promoting the interest of morality, they may expect the rancour, and had they power, the persecution of infidels and anarchists: they may expect to be personally despised, to have their characters vilified, and their office and ministry held up to ridicule; that by such artifices, disrespect, prejudices, and unbelief, may be insinuated, and extensively circulated against religion. But of all this the ministers of the gospel were early warned, "Ye shall be hated of all men," said Jesus, "for my name's sake; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "And who is he that will harm you," said the apostle, "if you be followers of that which is good: but, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear: having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

A number, both of Christians and infidels, have lately avowed their principles of opposition to Religious Establishments, and their preference of congregational independence. At any other time, their avowal might have excited little attention; but, in the present crisis, every motion and change, even of no great magnitude, tends to give some general bias for or against, not merely the civil constitution, but the interest of religion. It should have

been better, therefore, had they been so disposed, to have denied themselves, at least for some time, this indulgence. One may ask a Christian, Why so eager to gratify every desire with so much impetuosity? It would seem as if accommodation to others, self-denial and humility, were none of the Christian virtues. Why this unchristian-like ambition, to spurn at subordination, and to be called of men every one Independent, and Master? Why so many rash experiments on the church, and on society? Have not the experiments already attempted, sufficiently disturbed and endangered the world? Were it not safer and better, to wait the issue of others experience, before we also hazard our all in the trial? It is unreasonable and cruel, to expose nations and generations to all the convulsions and calamities, which trivial differences of opinion, or fanciful systems of church government may occasion, for the purpose of mere selfish gratification, or of philosophical and political experiment or entertainment.

PARENTS, be solicitous "to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They are a precious trust, for which you are answerable, not only to society, but to the Supreme Ruler who gave you them, and to the final Judge, who shall require them at your hand. On the moral and religious education, which you may confer on them, shall depend your and their present comfort, and future and eternal happiness.

LET every one, of every rank and sex, consider the common danger, and beware. If you observe men, whose political and religious principles you suspect; men who have been disappointed, opposed, or fretted; men often

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